

Sight and Sound



LUIS BUÑUEL

and his secret life

THE FACE OF 'DREDD'

Film and book

THE QUAYS ON SET

Puppets and phantoms

'FRENZY' AND 'THE WICKER MAN'

The screenwriter remembers

BOOKS SPECIAL

David Thomson on

Katharine Hepburn

DEFENDING

THE ACTION MOVIE

GANCE'S 'NAPOLEON' TO 'DIE HARD WITH A VENGEANCE'



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Sight and Sound

August 1995



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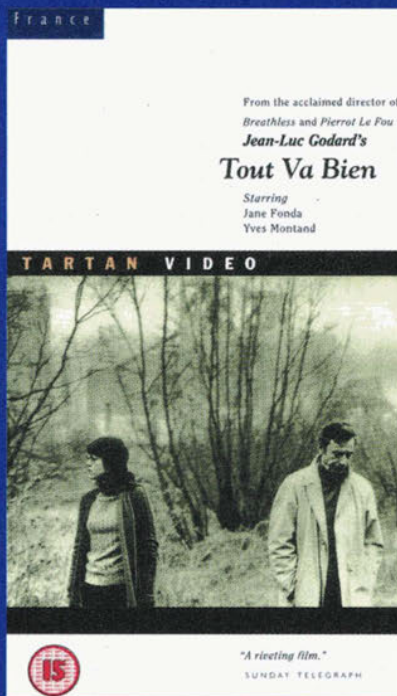
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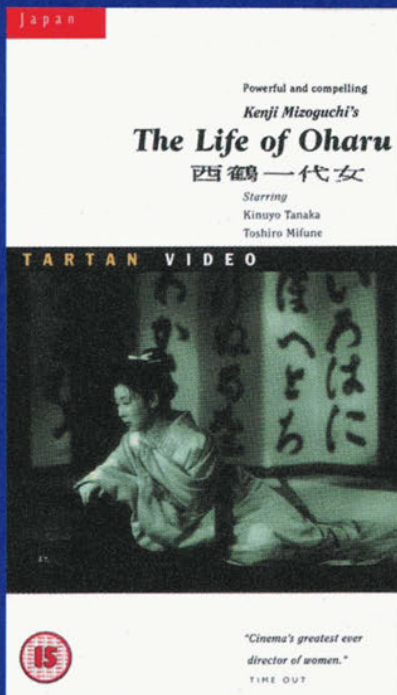
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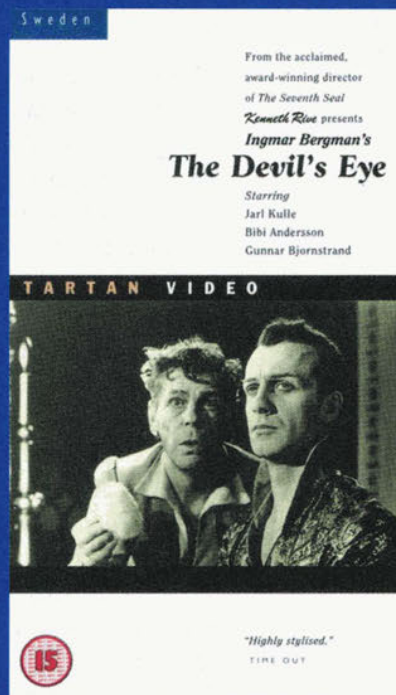
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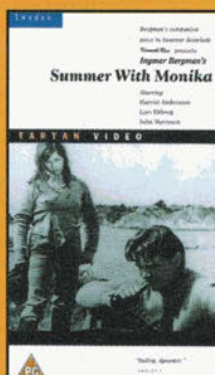
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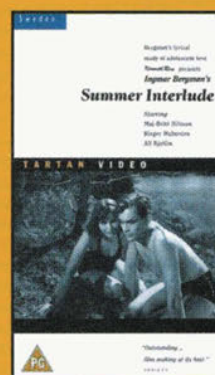
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VARIETY

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is a lyrical study of adolescent love, a poetic evocation of
the burden of memory and loss. *Summer With Monika*, the
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of just **£10.99** each, or **£20.00** for the two.*

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After the screens

Contributors to this issue

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Just as the (short-lived) excitement about National Lottery money boosting British film production has faded away, the real British film boom – the rapid expansion in the number of exhibition outlets – has come back into focus. After a major corporate bidding war, a consortium led by Virgin Entertainment beat off rival bids from Rank and Carlton Communications to purchase Britain's largest cinema chain, MGM, from Credit Lyonnaise.

Virgin's newfound interest in cinema exhibition is a clear sign that there may be a lot more money to be made in British cinemas over and above the current profits of the exhibitors. Why else would Virgin's opponents have fought so hard? Britain's film exhibition business is now in its second phase of rapid expansion – more than 30 new multiplex sites are already planned for the next three years. Virgin has promised to spend "tens of millions of pounds" on ten new multiplexes to revitalise what the *Sunday Times* describes as "a lacklustre service area".

Film exhibition and distribution in Britain is still largely organised to the benefit of the American studios whose exhibition arms own the majority of screens, and there is no evidence that the emergence of a new contender will necessarily change the status quo (not least because Virgin's bid was largely underwritten by its American consortium partner, TPG). On the other hand, Virgin's plans can only be good news in a country whose number of screens per head of population is still below that of most other EC countries.

The real question is whether the new owners of MGM can be persuaded, on a regular basis, to screen the kinds of films that the usual multiplexes refuse to show, and to package them in a way that makes them attractive to a predominantly young audience. Video has led the way – for good and bad – in marketing what used to be called art-house films in ways that make them seem hospitable for new audiences, for whom the term 'art-house' has a period feel. Virgin should take heart from

the success of video and accommodate a far wider range of films in the chain than is usual. The government and other interested bodies certainly ought to pressurise them to do so. With Richard Branson named in a recent poll as a popular icon among the young, he is in a powerful position to do something useful.

But whatever he does, it is important that melancholy does not become the order of the day over film exhibition. After all, the multiplex chains have not obliterated the other places where films can be seen. In addition to the NFT and the BFI-supported regional film theatres, television and video now provide the majority of the population with film choices that were simply not available 30 years ago. And of course if BT begins to send films down phone lines, this may further dilute the stranglehold of the distributors and exhibitors on what we see. Cinemas will always remain important, but not as important as they once were, whoever owns them.

Sight and Sound/Independent Young Film Journalist of the Year

The winner is Max Schaefer, for his review of the New Zealand film *Once Were Warriors*. The judges (Philip Dodd and Nick James of *Sight and Sound* and Sheila Johnston and John Lyttle of the *Independent*) were impressed by the vigour and energy of the writing, its willingness to take risks and its ability to combine vivid detail with sophisticated argument. Max Schaefer wins a Macintosh Performa 630 multimedia computer with an integrated TV tuner and CD-Rom drive, plus a week's placement on *Sight and Sound* and *The Independent*.

The overall standard of the entries was fair, but few writers succeeded in combining an elegant prose style with an original and insightful approach to their chosen film. However, the judging team would like to commend two close runners-up, Carlos Grande and Angela Pertusini, both of whom reviewed the basketball documentary *Hoop Dreams*.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'This obsession with the opening weekend box office is getting crazy. So much resting on such a narrow window. The livelihoods of brilliant, creative people like Jerry hanging in the balance... it might explain why the snivelling coward hasn't called with our own weekend figures yet.'

The business

MAINLINE PICTURES



Dacoit defender: 'Bandit Queen'

● It seems that Phoolan Devi, the Bandit Queen of Uttar Pradesh, has changed her mind again and given her blessing to the film about her life which was co-produced by Channel 4.

Phoolan became a dacoit in 1979, and achieved a Robin Hood reputation in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh as a defender of the ordinary villagers against the Thakurs (land-owning caste) before negotiating a surrender to the authorities on 12 February 1983. The terms of the surrender were immediately violated and Phoolan spent 11 years in jail, during which time Mala Sen wrote the biography *Bandit Queen*, on which the film was based.

Phoolan herself at first apparently supported the film, then, as its international reputation grew, disowned it in ringing tones. At the end of May, however, she told the *Calcutta Telegraph* that she had always supported it, but had been forced to disown it by her husband Umed Singh, whom she is now in the process of divorcing.

The change of heart carries remarkable echoes of Phoolan's earlier attempts to dissociate herself from her Bandit Queen image, claiming that the dacoit leader Vikram Mallah, who became her lover, had abducted her, then forced her to rob and kill. It also comes after the out-of-court settlement Phoolan reached with Channel 4 and the film's Indian producer, Sundep Bedi, whom she sued last year to prevent *Bandit Queen* being released in India.

It's also worth recording in this context that India's Central Board of Film Classification is still insisting on cuts – notably to the female nudity and sexual violence which have made *Bandit Queen* notorious in the West – which the director, Shekhar Kapur, is still refusing to make.

Bandit Queen was released in the UK at the end of last year by Mainline and

went out in the US this June through Arrow Releasing. Its Indian release, meanwhile, still seems remote.

Do you ever sit and watch the TV news and ask yourselves which of these stories is Hollywood going to buy? The Tonya Harding/Nancy Kerrigan spat was a pretty obvious choice, though in the event it got no further than two rival television mini-series. The O. J. Simpson movie can't be far away and, even now, you may be sure that teams of writers are looking for the "real story" behind the Oklahoma bombing.

Think back to early June, however. Do you recall images of a clean-cut young American, his eyes brimming with honest tears, thanking God and the US Marines for getting him out of Bosnia? His name, in case you've forgotten (sic transit gloria mundi), was Air Force Captain Scott F. O'Grady.

Within days, reports began to appear that Tom Cruise was interested in playing him on the screen. The Air Force has yet to agree, but Hollywood is salivating at the prospect of the story, especially since the hero has Tinseltown connections. Dario Scardapane, the screenwriter who wrote 'Posse', is O'Grady's stepbrother.

Mr Busy's somewhat ambiguous feelings

about the project (all those character actors who used to specialise in sneering Nazis and could, therefore, have fitted Hollywood's profile of a Serb have long since hung up their jackboots) were crystallised a couple of days later by another Bosnia-based news item which came a lot further down the news.

It was about a former Fire Chief from Rhode Island who was just about to give up his volunteer fire brigade activities in Sarajevo – which he had run for some time under increasingly impossible circumstances – because the money had run out. The Chief was not good-looking and clean-cut (at a pinch, John Goodman might have played him) and, in a defiant display of unAmerican-ness, chain-smoked throughout the interview. And his views on the attitude of the US government to the war in the former Yugoslavia, while quite as forthright as those of Capt. O'Grady, were a tad less complimentary. Mr Busy was left in no doubt as to who was the real hero.

● Following this column's speculations whether the US distribution company, Miramax, might not be looking for someone to buy it from Disney, I have to announce a classic fudge on the issue which looked like bringing things to a head: Miramax's upcoming release of the controversial film *Kids*, in which young people have sex instead of engaging in more acceptable filmic activities such as saving whales or playing Little League baseball.

The film, however, is opening in the US under a different banner: that of the newly-formed Excalibur Films, headed by Eamonn Bowles, who used to work for the Samuel Goldwyn Co.

Don't, however, read too much into the change of distributor: Excalibur Films was set up and is wholly owned by Bob and Harvey Weinstein, who run Miramax. But since it does not have any direct link with the Walt Disney Company, the Buena Vista corporate logo will not appear on the same screen as the aforementioned underaged bonking.

So sleep in peace, Mouseketeers.



Roman holiday: 'Caligula', which Bob Guccione of 'Penthouse' was involved in

Speaking of the Samuel Goldwyn Co, the film and television company headed by son of Sam, there are signs of real trouble at what has so far been one of the great independent success stories of the past 15 years.

Goldwyn put its money into such recent 'quality' films as 'Much Ado About Nothing' and 'The Madness of King George', establishing itself as the one undeniably gilt-edged indie in the business. It recently announced plans to set up a distribution company in the UK in conjunction with Channel 4, its partner on 'King George'. And its television department has a few solidly commercial programmes under its belt, notably the very un-quality 'American Gladiators', the source of our own winter-weekend Battles of the Bulging Costumes.

For the year ended 31 March, however, The Samuel Goldwyn Co. announced losses of \$20 million, following a lacklustre 1994-95 release schedule including 'Oleanna' and 'The Perez Family'. Goldwyn Television is also heavily financially committed to a new series of 'Flipper' (that's right, the one with the dolphin).

Now, while \$20 million is little more than an error in the catering budget for a major studio, it can spell disaster for an independent like Goldwyn, which has existing debts of \$62.5 million and relies heavily on lines of credit to keep operating. Bank of America recently took over from Chemical Bank as Goldwyn's financiers, but failed to find lenders to underwrite an \$80 million credit line for the company at the end of last year.

Goldwyn stock dropped 33 per cent on Wall Street following the March 93-March 94 figures, and company president Meyer Gottlieb announced plans for restructuring, with probable job losses.

● Readers who, like Mr Busy, have reached the conclusion that one of the UK's erstwhile exciting directors is becoming a little too concerned with issues of sexual fantasy will be interested to know that Nic Roeg recently signed a movie deal with Bob Guccione, publisher of *Penthouse*, whose only previous excursion into film was the 1979 farrago *Caligula*.

The really interesting thing about the deal – which may or may not result in a \$40 million screen biography of the Empress Catherine the Great of Russia – is that Roeg wrote the screenplay and Guccione will direct.

Or that's what was announced in Cannes, anyway.

Short films are not the sexiest part of the movie business. The Academy tried to drop them from the Oscars a couple of years ago, but was prevented from doing so at the last moment because shorts have, traditionally, been the training ground for new talent.

The problem is getting anyone to see them. While they remain in competition in Cannes, they are no longer shown before the main competition films, but in a sparsely-attended special screening slot of their own instead. And they have long since disappeared from Britain's cinemas, with the result that 'Supporting Programme' now means 10 minutes of trailers and a few scratchy

pieces of film promoting things they're not allowed to advertise on television.

Shorts still have their champions, however, including Jochen Girsch, of sales company Brussels AVE, who energetically promotes them on the festival circuit.

And, closer to home, an outfit called Quadrangle Films is to launch The Smallest Cinema in the World at this month's Edinburgh Festival, with daily screenings of a programme of its own shorts in the Pleasance Theatre Courtyard.

● *Barb Wire* has already gone down in movie history as *Baywatch* babe Pamela Anderson's bid to be taken seriously. It attracted more attention at Cannes than any of the films that had actually been made. It will be the first US film for *Once Were Warriors* male star Temuera Morrison. And it's already in trouble.

The latest attempt to turn a cult comic into a hit movie, in the wake

of *The Mask* (which scored a bullseye), *Tank Girl* (off the board) and *Judge Dredd* (still on the ockey at time of writing), *Barb Wire* began shooting on 23 May in Los Angeles under director Adam Rifkin, who made as good a movie as could have been expected from the Charlie Sheen vehicle, *The Chase*.

Rifkin lasted a week, however, before being replaced by David Hogan, whose only previous experience has been making music videos. No reason was given for the switch.

Another abrupt departure, also unexplained, was that of French director Jean-Jacques Beineix from his position as head of France's powerful directors' and producers' lobbying organisation ARP (Association des Auteurs, Réalisateurs et Producteurs).

Beineix, who has made use of the platform to promote the notion of French and European cinema against what he calls "the voracious



Barb watch: Pamela Anderson gets serious

appetites of the international programming industry", has long been at loggerheads with the more traditionally-minded secretary-general of ARP, Pascal Rogard, who (unlike Beineix) is a full-time salaried official of the organisation.

Things came to a head in early May, and Beineix quit. He has been temporarily replaced by Claude Miller.

● Those planning a trip to Moscow in a couple of years time may be able to thrill to the Russian equivalent of the Universal Studios Tour. It will be called Pushkinland (no kidding) and is currently being planned by Russian actress Natasha Andreichenko, who played the mistress of the character her real-life husband Maximilian Schell plays, in James Gray's brilliant movie *Little Odessa*. Andreichenko is also planning to produce a series of films based on the work of the Russian writer.

Good to see a few years in the US has taught Andreichenko the value of merchandising tie-ins. Just hope it works a bit better than *Bobbyland*.

Finally, a note of sadness. A brief obituary in *Variety* was all that marked the passing of Bruno Lawrence, one of Australasia's most memorable actors. A mutual friend had told me in Cannes that he had cancer and had had to back out of Mark Joffe's film *'Così'*. He died on 9 June.

Bruno possessed an extraordinary range that encompassed the father who fights to hold onto his daughter in Roger Donaldson's *'Smash Palace'*; the mad, Sergio Leone-style gunman in Geoff Murphy's *'Utu'*; and one of the three people who survive the end of the world in *'The Quiet Earth'*. His achievement in the latter, which required him to be alone on screen for the whole of the first half of the film, was truly remarkable.

Above all, though, Bruno's distinctive presence – his rasping voice and bear-like build wholly at variance with the sensitivity he could bring to a role – marked that first flowering of New Zealand cinema in the early 1980s as surely as Albert Finney's did the emerging British cinema of the 1960s.



A great actor: Bruno Lawrence in 'Utu'

BRUSSELS NOTES

Africa's future film

As the centre of the European Community, Brussels knows a thing or two about cultural co-operation. And the latest addition to the burgeoning festival circuit, the Second Annual *Cinéma d'Afrique* festival, held 12-17 June in the august surroundings of the central Musée des Beaux Arts, saw the EC extending its remit beyond its boundaries. In effect, this non-competitive festival is a showcase for some of the films funded under the EU's European Development Fund, Fed, which, under the terms of the 1985 Lomé Convention, promises several billion *ecus* for the development and promotion of cinema in Black Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

For the complex system of funding this implies, film-makers from the 70 ACP countries submit proposals to their governments, all in accordance with priority subject areas set by the EC. So, in any one region, the EC might specify that only films dealing with historical or cultural subject matter become eligible for its donations. The end result is that the films chosen, which often have to be approved by several countries' ministries in turn, are of a high quality, but are nonetheless subject to a variety of political demands. (There are, for example, an inordinate number of Francophone productions.)

The festival, run by M'Baye Sene Papa, a member of the EU's African film-making Policy Unit, may be a small-scale affair, but it has brought the Belgian public some of the most important African films of the last two years. Many have been

prizewinners elsewhere. Mali's Cheick Oumar Sissoko, whose *Guimba* won best film award at Ouagadougou, opened the proceedings. Fellow Malian Souleymane Cissé, closed them, with his latest film, the Pan Africanist *Waati*. In between came another prizewinner, *Le Grand Blanc de Lambaréné*, Cameroonian Bassek Ba Kobhio's epic on the last years of Albert Schweitzer's life.

But it was Idrissa Ouedraogo's film, *Le Cri du coeur*, which caused the greatest waves. The film has been much criticised by the African film-making community for the director's apparent rejection of appropriately African subject matter and style, in favour of an attempted mimicry of European commercial conventions. The story, of a young Malian boy whose sense of cultural displacement on arriving in France prompts him to see visions of hyenas, doesn't quite come off, but it is a brave film, indicative of a possible trend for experimentation among African film-makers.

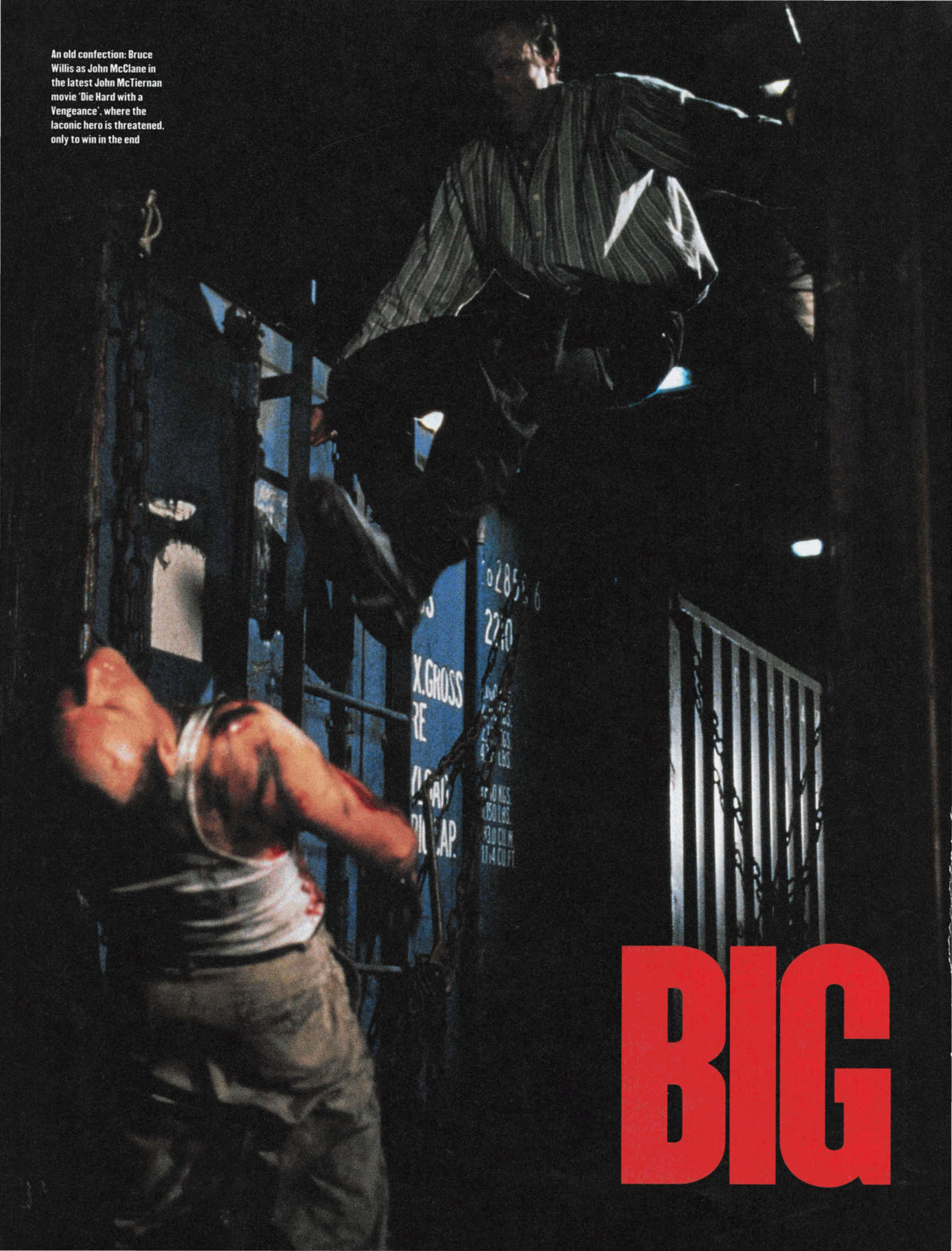
When Cheick Oumar Sissoko stepped on stage to introduce *Guimba*,



he did not reveal that his prizewinning film was one of the few at the festival not to have been awarded EC funding. Yet *Guimba* is a remarkable film, a complex matrix of historical, cultural and political analogy, blending African-inspired narrative codes with the look if not the feel of a European epic. On the surface, it comments on political and domestic tyranny. On another level, it attempts to recapture the cultural glory of Africa's past, in stunning architectural spaces and costume detail. Though it satisfied the regional funding criteria, its application was turned down by the Malian authorities, despite the electoral demise of dictator Moussa Traoré.

If the EU funding system cannot evade such political determinants, what is the future of African cinema thus funded under the system? While there was some debate about which type of African cinema should be worthy of funding, it appears on the evidence of the films showcased that it will remain a high quality, auteurist and sometimes experimental cinema. Esi Eshun A major film programme entitled *'Screen Griots: The Art & Imagination of African Cinema'* begins with the African Classic Season on 2 August at the National Film Theatre. It features 12 landmark films chosen from a range selected by eminent African film-makers, over 20 years. It includes work by such great directors as Sembène, Chahine, Ouedraogo and Gerima. For a *'Screen Griots'* brochure, contact the African & Caribbean Unit, BFI 0171 255 1444 ext 327. For booking contact NFT Box Office 0171 928 3232.

An old confection: Bruce Willis as John McClane in the latest John McTiernan movie 'Die Hard with a Vengeance', where the laconic hero is threatened, only to win in the end



BIG

Do James Bond, '2001' and 'Star Wars' provide the ingredients for such Action Movies as the 'Die Hard' trilogy? And why don't critics like such films? By screenwriter Larry Gross

● *Batman Forever* grosses \$53 million in its first weekend. *Waterworld* will do whatever it will do. *Die Hard with a Vengeance* has performed. *Judge Dredd* is presumed to be so bad that it won't, but *Congo* has eluded the worst reviews imaginable so you can't figure. Whatever you call this genre – the movie-as-Theme-Park, the movie-as-Giant-Comic-Book, the movie-as-Ride – I call it simply the Big Loud Action Movie. For better or worse it has been a central economic fact, structuring all life, thought and practice in Hollywood at least since the late 70s. This will not change soon.

The Big Loud Action Movie may seem like the size of the American Government, too big and wasteful to win anyone's intellectual assent or moral approval, and also too big to reform itself or go away. Challenges to this way of making films are routinely voiced. Condemnations of the content of such pictures (and the lack thereof) are routinely offered. But the fact remains, simple, pristine, inescapable: Big Loud Action Pictures make up an enormous percentage of those films that gross over \$200 million in the United States, and go on to make five times that in foreign and ancillary markets.

With numbers like that Hollywood will never stop making these films.

The genre we're living with today I date as commencing in the Year of our Lord 1977, the year of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. For me these films mark a new moment in thinking successfully (and in newly marketable terms) about making visually spectacular cinema. But commercial film was arguably itself born through spectacle, and spectacular action, with *The Birth of a Nation* in 1915. The moment there was sound, film-makers recorded the voice of *King Kong* (1933) and the airplane machineguns that would shoot him down, to give huge audiences cheap thrills.

Indeed, the reason that a simple kneejerk condemnation of the Big Loud Action Movie of today is unsound is that some of the greatest films in cinema history – from Abel Gance's *Napoléon* to *2001* – overlap and interweave in their aspirations and in their formal procedures with the Big Loud Action Movies – this corporatised crap – that Hollywood makes today. Our scorn for this degradation of epic cinema needs to be modified by awareness that the serpent tail of grandiosity is as much to be found in the so-called sophisticated

members of the film audience as in the thrill-junkies, presumed brainless, who live off the current crop.

Hollywood has been pragmatically schizoid about the status of Action in its narratives from the beginning. Serial pulp fiction, as far back as Pearl White and Fairbanks and their adventure flicks, has been churned out by Hollywood: low-budget sci-fi, westerns, thrillers, all things B for many decades. But at the same time the claim of epic special effects, action and imagery has always attracted whoever was on Hollywood's A List. *Wings*, directed by William Wellman, was the Action movie of its day (1927) and won the first prestigious Academy Award. A classic prestige picture from mid-30s Hollywood, such as W. S. Van Dyke's *San Francisco*, tells a fairly ordinary-scale romantic soap opera story, but gets its audience juiced with ten minutes of huge special effects and unremitting action when the city itself succumbs to an earthquake. Even in so tame a picture, the shrilling shock of scale is part of the commercial package. David Selznick ingeniously applied scale to every detail of *Gone with the Wind*, and turned it into the most popular film of American film of all time, still. Although it does not rely on wall-to-wall violence, everything in it, even the floral prints on Scarlett O'Hara's dresses, is big. Selznick is also one of the precursors of the Big Loud Action Movie because he was involved in marketing his film in a new way. *Gone with the Wind* is the prototype of the Event Picture that *Batman Returns* represents today. Total saturation of every adjacent media outlet is used to pound consumers with "awareness" of the film. This procedure Selznick invented.

Lean to Bond

So we acknowledge that serious artists have always tried to make "big" pictures, throughout film history. Griffith and Gance have already been mentioned, but probably the prototype of the serious big-scale Action director working within the commercial system, in the pre-*Star Wars* world, is David Lean. To understand where we are and what we've given up along the way, consider *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and *Lawrence of Arabia*. These films share a number of vulgar commercial aspirations with the Big Loud Action Movie. They are blatantly in love with their own technology. They are

loud and violent epics trying rigorously to reduce most dramatic situations to issues of extreme physical jeopardy. They are expansions of a Kipling-esque adolescent boys' adventure universe.

But what Lean retained are two realities that, since *Star Wars*, Big Loud Action Movies have managed to repress, eliminate or overcome: psychological complexity, and the registration of accurate social and historical detail. Even though Lean's films take place in a world of Action heroics, his protagonists (Alec Guinness in *Kwai*, Peter O'Toole in *Lawrence*) are capable of inwardness, of a conflicted self-questioning element that few 80s or 90s action heroes in a big expensive film are allowed time for. And the patterns of action do not, in Lean's films, entirely obliterate tangible lived social reality (specifically the facts of ethnic difference, between English and Japanese in *Kwai*, between English and Arab in *Lawrence*). Lean is a God to today's Big Action Loud Movie-Makers. Along with Akira Kurosawa he set a standard (for the time) of big-action, big-budget filmmaking that nonetheless managed to contain genuine seriousness. The Serious Action Epic was something Hollywood remained committed to throughout the 60s and 70s, in such projects as *Ben-Hur* and *Cleopatra*, in projects like *The Wild Bunch*, and finally in such Vietnam films as Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. The moment these last two films came out, 1978-79, was a strange, sad one in Hollywood: it did contain these instances of higher studio seriousness (in addition, there was Terry Malick's *Days of Heaven*), but these now seem poignantly dinosaurish in their ambition to combine commercial scale and seriousness. Subsequent attempts at this that were serious, such as *Empire of the Sun* or *Heaven's Gate*, have been deemed misfires or have been pragmatically chopped down into smaller, neater thematic packages so as to resemble the Big Loud Action Movie they actually want to surpass – sometimes such a modest expansion of ambition-in-disguise works fairly well as in *The Hunt for Red October* or *Clear and Present Danger*, movies with a whiff of nostalgia for the psychological and political complexities of the Lean/Kurosawa type of action movie.

I've associated Big Loud Action Movies with the phenomenal success and influence of George ▶

AND LOUD

◀ Lucas and Steven Spielberg, but before describing these directors' impact more specifically I want to point to three forces in the film-making of the late 60s and 70s that prepared us ("warmed us up" if you will) for the effect that Lucas and Spielberg were to have.

1. *James Bond* after *'From Russia with Love'* gives up *spying* for what? For an entirely new super-kinetic cartoon-type action movie, that's what. In the Bond series, from *Goldfinger* on, espionage and plot mechanics disappear almost entirely. Pure-action set pieces, large in scale, take over, moving the series ever more towards science fiction without claiming to go forward in time (not literally, anyway). And an industry never entirely absent from the Hollywood action cinema gets fully underway: the quip industry. James Bond never dispatches villains without an appropriate witty one-liner. That has become the mode of speech of protagonist of every Big Loud Action Movie ever since.

The Bond films were very important for other reasons. Technology, not only behind the screen, but as subject matter, as object of pleasurable consumption, becomes central. *Goldfinger's* lasers, Bond and his super-outfitted Aston Martin, these point to the marriage of Big Action and Science Fiction, the sense that the new hero must be a Superhero, *ergo* a technically enhanced one. My favourite instance of this in a full-fledged Big Loud Action Movie is Sigourney Weaver's big-and-tall loading machine in *Aliens*. Some 20 years have elapsed, but conceptually it's only a blink. It is also interesting that George Lucas said that he conceived of Indiana Jones exactly in opposition to James Bond, as a hero with a whip and a hat instead of machinery; but it is important to realise that (inevitably, oedipally) we always borrow a good deal from what we oppose. Indiana Jones' quipping urbanity owes a lot to Bond. Why else cast Sean Connery as his father?

2. *The Master Without Honour: the Cinema of Irwin Allen*. Here's an unreported fact about American cinema in the mid-70s. While Hollywood was at its post-war artiest, with people named Robert Altman, Hal Ashby and Bob Rafelson getting a majority of critical ink, Irwin Allen was busy making shitloads of money with *The Poseidon Adventure* and *The Towering Inferno*. The cruelly interpersonal action-adventure violence we're now used to was in low supply in these films; nonetheless gut-churning jeopardy fuelled every minute of their narrative structure. No dramatic experience other than imminent death was ever allowed on-screen, and they were films utterly involved in the romance of spectacular technology. They were films as engineering problems, something that men like Jim Cameron and John McTiernan have subsequently shown enormous interest in. The first two *Alien* movies and the first two *Die Hard* movies are in one important sense simply Irwin Allen movies, though much better directed and much more intricately produced. An implacable killing force/situation is unleashed in an isolated space and on a small group of people, resulting in one spectacular disaster/death after another, until the force/situation is either subdued or escaped. This is one of the basic formulas of the current Big Loud Action Movie.

3. *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Dare I suggest that this lofty metaphysical deep film, ratified by volumes of informed and serious critical speculation, is

Building to a climax: 'Gone with the Wind', an early spectacular film which believed everything should be 'big', below: 'The Towering Inferno', an Irwin Allen film which revelled in spectacular thrills, right

The hero and his discontents: Sean Connery as the witty daredevil James Bond, far right

top: Harrison Ford in 'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade', one of the genre spawned by Bond, centre right top

Action plus: 'Lawrence of Arabia', by David Lean, adored by today's Action Movie Directors, centre right bottom; 'The Empire Strikes Back', the parent of today's Action Movies, far right bottom



organically linked in film history to the big-scale junk the studios are churning out today? You bet.

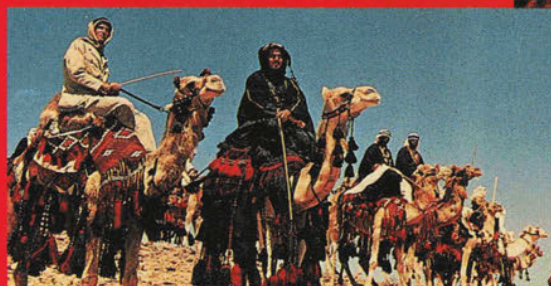
Firstly, there is not in fact really a single facet of the Big Loud Action Movie, good and bad, that doesn't partly have this film as its source.

Secondly, action is everything in 2001. Everything. Whether it's apes tossing bones, futuristic flight attendants picking up dropped pens or Keir Dullea as Astronaut Bowman in multicoloured close-up smashing through the time-space continuum, everything in 2001 is a sensory-action feat. Everything is a blast, a sensation, a thrill. Words are of next to no significance (except perhaps as illustration of the bad faith of relying on words). Psychology is next to nothing. Character interaction is next to nothing. To say that the film foregrounds a love of technology that mobilises audience attention, deriding all interest in narrative anecdote, is to put it mildly. And finally there's that chief pesky plot situation (when one finally does show up): the protagonists must undo the murderous work of a super-talented machine that isn't too fond of human beings. Don't you hear Jim Cameron's and Ridley Scott's wheels turning? I know I do.

Thirdly, Kubrick's subsequent extensive critical discussions of his movie – in their articulateness, confidence and overall hipness – became gospel to a nascent film-school generation. Cinema, in Kubrick's view, was to bypass literature

completely, to work entirely through the purely cinematic, to fuse image and sound in some graphically absolute fashion that would enable it also to bypass old logics, thereby reaching straight to a (presumably young, hip) audience's central nervous system. Which was utopian late 60s thinking. (The movie was, you may remember, a huge, huge hit, and this pretty much without journalistic critics supporting it). Perhaps every great revolutionary should work out what the perversion of his doctrine is going to be before he puts it forward – even when he enacts it as brilliantly as Kubrick did, both in theory and in practice. But that's not the way the historical cookie crumbles. Kubrick helped partly articulate the cultural excuse for Big Loud Action Movies.

Last summer, in the *New Yorker*, Anthony Lane invoked Kubrick's theology about action-oriented visual cinema when he compared Jan De Bont's *Speed* with the "pure cinema" of Bresson and Tarkovsky. He didn't stupidly or literally insist that the Keanu Reeves vehicle was as significant or as complex; he merely suggested that, at the level of cinema logic, they were not so very very different. Which is either a subtle type of ideological apologetics, or some genuine personal expression of enthusiasm. It also (along with high grosses) lets highly skilled practitioners of Big Loud Action Movies look at themselves in the mirror, or sleep at night. Kubrick, in a peculiar, roundabout way,



established the groundwork for elevating intellectually debased genre material to significance through the focus on form-for-its-own-sake as a mark of artistic seriousness. In this sense he made it possible for men like George Lucas and Steven Spielberg to turn in the direction they did.

Formula repackaged

All of which brings us back to the year 1977, and *Close Encounters* and *Star Wars*. To say cinema has never quite been the same (some would say it's never recovered) would be to slight the confirming impact of their collaboration four years later on, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Lucas and Spielberg absorbed, at every level, everything so far mentioned, and repackaged it all to formulate commercial cinema's discourse as we inhabit it today. To sum up:

1. Spielberg's and Lucas' elaborate and expensively produced elevation of B Movie genre plots. In *Close Encounters* you have the same ordinary-man-meets-Martians formats that fuelled countless bad 50s sci-fi films. Lucas went further back, to *Buck Rogers* serials and early comic books, for his sources. The pair simply and powerfully refused to imagine that this kind of trash was an inferior basis for movies, and they took their student awareness of genre cinema – from Ford and Hawks through to Kubrick – as their rationale.
2. There's a reduction of Narrative Complexity. *Star*

Wars is organised as four chases: Luke evades Imperial Guards; Luke chases after Princess Leia; Luke and pals are chased off the Death Star; Luke is pursued by Darth Vader as he attempts to drop his bomb-package. A chase, a chase, a chase, and a chase. The Big Loud Action Movie has proved its absorption of this doctrine over and over and over and over again: chase, explode, etc. By the time they made *Raiders* together, the two had the chase structure down to such precise levels of control that they got ten or 12 into the film (with sub-chases within some chases). The concept of the Ride is now fully in place. Such narrative austerity has proven to be so popular that it has inspired much rhetorical gymnastics to accommodate it: such narrative construction is referred to as "mythic". But it would be more accurate to call it comic-book narrative. I personally see nothing wrong with Comic Books. The first *Star Wars* is in my opinion superb comic-book film-making. But however much we'd like it to be, *Beowulf*, Wagner's *Ring Saga*, *The Waste Land* or Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* it just ain't.

3. *The Cinematic, the Image and Technology dominate the narrative experience.* Seeing spaceships entering and leaving the frame brought cheers from Lucas' first audiences. Narratively speaking, they had no idea what they were cheering for, but their senses were deeply gratified. When Luke and Han and the others went into hyperspace, well, people

came in their seats. Equally boldly on Spielberg's part, the last 15 minutes of *Close Encounters* was people watching people watching. A big lighted thing came on the screen, and the audience said it was good. This ability to make the visual sensation answer all questions of meaning and value is what makes Lucas and Spielberg the film-makers that a subsequent generation of directors of Big Loud Action Movie have wanted to be. Following Kubrick's example, food for the eyes (some would say candy) wins audience assent. And not just images: sound too plays its part. The sounds that exploded off the screen in the first gunfight in *Indiana Jones* were no mere handguns (I know because Joel Silver and Walter Hill later hired the sound effects of specialist Steve Flick to bring off similar effects for the gunfire in *48 Hrs.*). Lucas was so passionate about making sound a component to reach into the audience's consciousness that he decided to invent sound technology of his own.

4. *Of crucial importance to these films and their commercial poise is self-deprecating humour.* Han Solo and *Indiana Jones* and cute droids tell us that the film-maker is comedically self-conscious; this makes the movie's violence into fun, brings more kids into the theatre and successfully insulates the films from critical contempt. You can't insist the films are silly if the film-makers half-admit it ahead of you. The tension between action that is sensorially overwhelming and humour that ►



A fall guy: 'The Beast', an underrated Action Movie, directed by Kevin Reynolds

◀ permits you to breathe back away from it is the organising rhythm of all subsequent Big Loud Action Movies. Bond's one liners were key here (as in a slightly different way were Eastwood's in the Leone pictures) but with Spielberg and Lucas, the hint of self parody becomes a tactic for winning and keeping critics respect.

What will forever dignify what Spielberg and Lucas accomplished (aside from the profits) is that they were the first to bring all these elements together with that degree of personal purpose that so much subsequent formula product has lacked. Lucas peddled *Star Wars* to the studios for half a decade before making it on a very modest budget. Spielberg did a quiet survey of how many people believed in UFOs, making the assumption that this was the modest audience he could count on to justify the cost of making his film. The much vaster-than-anticipated success of the films has forever dispelled the relative innocence and authenticity with which they were undertaken.

Since 1981, the institutionalisation of the Big Loud Action Movie has proceeded apace. It has realigned the creative atmosphere in Hollywood, shaping the release slates of all the major studios and virtually crushing European art cinema. I don't think that it is either particularly necessary or particularly edifying to savage the worst of these movies. They tend to disappear from our minds and memories with merciful speed. Some of us are in the process of forgetting while still sitting in the theatre. I'd like to consider two of the best, and speculate on what makes them a little bit different. Both Jim Cameron's *Aliens* and Andy Davis' *The Fugitive* take the relentless jeopardy structure and chase aspect and the spectacular scale imagery of the Big Loud Action Movie, and organise them with unusual coherence and an unusual component of emotional sincerity.

Neither film deviates from the norm of this kind of movie. They don't have real relationships, but both skilfully refer to the feeling of those relationships that their story structure must preclude. Sigourney Weaver, running and shooting her way through *Aliens*, is always hungering for the material relationship to little Newt that there's no time for within the movie's structure; Harrison Ford palpably agonises over the loss of

material happiness imposed by the plot he's trapped in. In a sense the audience feels the impact of these drastically oversimplified jeopardy situations more deeply in both films than in other Big Loud Action Movies. So they succeed in having it both ways – comic-book simplicity of situation and emotional power.

Both films also cleverly vary the monotony of the pure action-hero-in-jeopardy format, by introducing, with speed and precision, a group of lively subordinate characters. Weaver's fellow alien-killing marines and Tommy Lee Jones' team of scared-but-sleepy detectives take us out of the exclusive narcissistic focus-at-all-costs on the hero. Thus we are getting judicious injections of a few elements from the older, more serious Action movies into today's Big Loud Action Movie format. Both *Aliens* and *The Fugitive* are interestingly melancholy films. They obliquely allude to our contemporary feeling of powerlessness. The heroes do not win so much as endure, or survive, while "humour" feels like a legitimate expression of an outlet for anxiety rather than a knee-jerk reminder that none of this should be taken that seriously.

Region of retreat

This year's model, *Batman Forever*, is clearly critic proof. This format, which is hyperbolising our anxiety about urban crime while kidding our dream of easily overcoming it, has simply (as the saying goes) "caught on". *Die Hard with a Vengeance* is skilful status quo. *Johnny Mnemonic* has had, I think, a bit of a bad rap: it strives to incorporate *Alphaville* as much as *Total Recall*. The guy I feel a little badly for is Kevin Reynolds. A decade ago he made a movie called *The Beast* (about Russian soldiers lost in a desperate and senseless mission in the Afghanistan desert). It was as determined and lucid a serious Action Epic as any in the last 15 years. It was roundly ignored by audiences and critics. He has retreated, for career health reasons, into the region of the Big Loud Action Movie, and *Waterworld*. I'm not sure he will get out alive. 'Batman Forever' opens on 14 July and is reviewed on page 40 of this issue. 'Die Hard with a Vengeance' opens on 18 August and is reviewed on page 45 of this issue. 'Waterworld' opens on 11 August.

LARRY GROSS' GUIDE TO ACTION MOVIE MAKERS

GODS

D. W. Griffith
Abel Gance
Fritz Lang
Louis Feuillade
Cecil B. DeMille

TITANS

David Lean
Akira Kurosawa
Stanley Kubrick
Sergio Leone
Sam Peckinpah

KINGS

Steven Spielberg
George Lucas

CROWN PRINCES

Paul Verhoeven
John McTiernan
James Cameron
Ridley Scott
Tony Scott
Andy Davis
Renny Harlin

FOREIGN NOBLES

George Miller
John Woo

ASPIRANTS TO THE THRONE

Kathryn Bigelow
David Fincher
Danny Cannon
Marco Brambilla
Alex Proyas
Kevin Reynolds

PATRONS

Sam Spiegel
Mario Kassar
Robert "Cubby" Broccoli
Joel Silver
Andy Vajna
David O. Selznick
Dino De Laurentiis

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

(Hollywood slang for those who can carry big budget action films)

Harrison Ford
Arnold Schwarzenegger
Bruce Willis
Sylvester Stallone
Kevin Costner
Mel Gibson

CLAUDE BERRI PRESENTS
ISABELLE ADJANI • DANIEL AUTEUIL • JEAN-HUGUES ANGLADE
VINCENT PEREZ & VIRNA LISI

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the sister of a King,
the wife of a King.
...and the lover of an enemy.

CANNES 1994
Winner Prix Du Jury & Best Actress - Virna Lisi

La Reine Margot¹⁸

A Film by PATRICE CHEREAU

Based upon the Novel by ALEXANDRE DUMAS
Screen Adaptation DANIELE THOMPSON & PATRICE CHEREAU
Dialogue DANIELE THOMPSON



DOMINIQUE BLANC • PASCAL GREGGORY • CLAUDIO AMENDOLA • MIGUEL HOFÉ • ASIA ARGENTO • JULIEN RASSAM • THOMAS KRIEBSCHMANN with the participation of JEAN-CLAUDE BRIALY
Music GORAN BRIGOVIC Editions POLYGRAM MUSIC FOR FILMS/RENN PRODUCTIONS Film's Original Music Produced by KOMUNA KAMARAD Director of Photography PHILIPPE ROUSSELOT a.s.c. Set Designers RICHARD PEDUZZI & OLIVIER RAINOT
Costume Designer MONIELE BICCHI Editors FRANCOIS GEDIGIER & HELENE VIARD Sound GUILLAUME SCIAMA & DOMINIQUE HENNEQUIN Director of Production JEAN-CLAUDE BOURLAT Executive Producer PIERRE GRUNSTEIN
A RENN PRODUCTIONS FRANCE 2 CINEMA D.A. FILMS (Paris) NIK FILMPRODUKTION GmbH/DREKETO for ARD/WMG (Munich) RCS FILMS & TV (Rome) Co-production with the participation of the CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINEMATOGRAPHIE and of CANAL+
This film has been supported by funds EURIMAGES of European Council
GUILD OF ACTRESS
CC (CINEMA CATALAN)
Original Motion Picture Soundtrack on Cophonogram Compact Disc & Cassette [English Sub-titles]

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The sense of uncanny space that governs *Institute Benjamenta* begins on set. The film was shot last summer in Hampton Court House – not the Hampton Court, but a stately, now-gutted pile just down the road from its more imposing namesake. Though on a much larger scale, this house is another of those strange, hermetic trick boxes that so many of the Quays' animation films are set in: *Street of Crocodiles*, *This Unnameable Little Broom*, *The Comb*. Walk in through the front door and you immediately find yourself caught up in a labyrinthine tangle – of corridors, staircases and above all, of thick skeins of electrical cable trailing off into nowhere. There's a pallid, monotone atmosphere hanging over the whole place, as if the building were already in black and white even before the film is made; its long, cramped passages belong not to any recognisable English country-house architecture, but rather to the fossilised phantom Europe that is the true location of the Quays' fictions.

This Europe is represented by the writers whose work has served as inspiration (rather than, strictly speaking, material) for the Quays' films. Theirs is the world of Kafka, of Bruno Schulz, the Polish author of *The Street of Crocodiles*, and of the Swiss writer Robert Walser (1878-1956), whose texts inspired *The Comb* and whose short novel *Jakob von Gunten* (1908) provides the armature for their new film.

Institute Benjamenta, or *This Dream People Call Human Life* is a film that manipulates space in

every way imaginable, beginning with its mixing of human-size space with the miniatures of its animation sequences. In it, views of the outside world are transmuted into cramped mental dreamscapes, and a forest becomes an inner chamber painted with forest imagery and an anamorphic depiction – stretched along one wall, and readable only from one viewpoint, like the skull in Holbein's *Ambassadors* – of rutting deer.

Hampton Court House does seem to serve the Quays' purposes unusually well; they chose it because they felt "it could be manipulated quite handsomely." Even so, they say, "We were tremendously disappointed, in a way. What you'd like to find is a miraculous space – we had to force it a bit." Still, they appear to have annexed the house fairly thoroughly to their own universe, to the extent of camping in the attic for the duration of the six-week shoot.

The scene being shot the day I visit takes place in an upper room of the Benjamenta Institute, which is a training college for male servants; Kraus, a blank, robotic inmate, is pouring buckets of water onto the floor, so that the water will drip down the walls of the room below. Hunched together in a low-ceilinged room, the crew watches as actor Daniel Smith several times picks up his heavy iron bucket and slowly, deliberately, mimes emptying its contents at the foot of the wall. He's dressed in anonymous workman's mufti and covered in matte make-up that deadens his expression and

drains the colour from his face, he looks indeed like a student who's been so long in the classroom that chalk dust has filled every pore.

In reality, this attic is situated in the basement of Hampton Court House, with a false floor built to catch the water. This inversion of up and down has even infected the dark fish floating morosely around a large, eye-like globe that is set in a podium in the centre of the room. As a ray of light from above hits the tank, the fish is meant to become animated. But it won't go close enough to the top to make itself visible – it's a bottom feeder, and even attempts to stir it to action have little effect.

Institute Benjamenta is a bold move for the Quays, who over the last 15 years have established themselves as among the most original film-makers working in Britain (they're actually American) and among the most extraordinary animators in the world. Their shorts, fragmentary and elusive as they are, comprise as complete an imaginative universe as you'll find in any contemporary film-maker's world, themes, images and sounds all recurring with the force of obsession. Until now this world of automata, miniatures and transformed objects has existed in its own safe, enclosed space, in the brothers' Southwark studio. But for their first full-length feature, they've turned their attention to the outside world, to human actors instead of puppets. Their cast includes Mark Rylance (of *The Grass Arena*, *Prospero's Books* and Philip Haas' forthcoming *Angels and Insects*), Alice Krige (from

LIFE'S A DREAM

An eerie novel is the inspiration for the first feature by animators The Quay Brothers, makers of 'Street of Crocodiles'. Jonathan Romney spoke to them. Overleaf, they reflect on the new film's images

Chariots of Fire and the BBC's *Scarlet and Black*) and Fassbinder-veteran Gottfried John.

When we first discussed this project (S&S March 1992), the Quays told me their intention was to use actors primarily as dancers. The model they had in mind was another animator's first foray into live action: Walerian Borowczyk's *Goto, l'île d'amour*. Now the film is completed, they feel they have kept to their plan. "We wrote the script from the point of view of the actors being puppets. We treated the actors with as much respect as we treated our puppets." From anyone else, this might suggest lofty Stroheimian disdain; for the brothers, adepts at the minutiose manipulation of small moving parts, this is respect indeed.

They haven't taken the easy route with this project – they could have adapted a well-known story or even a complete one. In the event, they have taken Walser's novel as a provisional skeleton, eliding it with other of the author's texts, notably his versions of *Snow White* and *Cinderella*. They have also worked in some concerns that are more specifically Quavian – especially a running seam of deer iconography that carries over from *Tales From Vienna Woods*, the third in their *Stille Nacht* series of shorts.

Jakob von Gunten is a novel with a strong fairy-tale centre. Its hero, the scion of a wealthy family, is an innocent venturing into an ogre's lair, who, in his desire to abnegate all elements of his self and will, signs on at this institute that

A dark fairy tale: The Quay Brothers' 'Institute Benjamin'

claims to train servants. There, under the tutelage of Herr Benjamenta and his haunted, doomed sister Lisa, Jakob learns to lose himself in a series of monotonous and singularly pointless exercises, presided over by head boy Kraus, described as the "perfect zero". This novel is one of many Walser texts said to have influenced Kafka, and in its narrator's enthusiastic embrace of nullity and abjection, you can see how (although Walser's digressive, wilfully profligate use of language, as far as a non-reader of German can tell, seems to have more in common with the prose poems of the proto-surrealist French writer Max Jacob).

The film's most radical departure from the book is its near-total erasure of signs of the world outside the Institute. The school becomes, instead, a decadent sealed sanctum governed by its own opaque rituals. The Quays saw the building itself as the film's main character; in which case, the other lead player is light, which has rarely been so mercurial on film, certainly never in a realistic fiction.

Throughout, light from outside is caught in the Institute's refracting trap and distended and distressed – in a very real sense *animated*. In extraordinary corridor scenes, cinematographer Nic Knowland contrives to have the light from passing trams behave like an ornate, mobile fan grazing the walls and floor before folding in on itself.

"The light developed on location," say the Quays. "We always said that light would have a sense. Black and white gives it that sense of flaring, of luminescence rather than just light. There was a feeling of nocturnal light being different from the quality of daylight, which would pierce through the goldfish bowl."

Another leitmotif, one which seems inexplicable in conventional terms, is that of deers and forests: the secret room that looks like a *trompe l'oeil* woodland clearing; the antlers on every wall of the Institute; an exhibit case containing powdered stag semen; even a single shot in which Herr Benjamenta himself appears to have a cloven hoof. Unexpectedly the brothers are able to provide a back story that you would never guess from watching the film, but which does logically justify the presence of every deer element: "We imagined the Institute had a former life as a factory for producing perfume. Perfumes come from musk, which comes from male deer – so we laid that fiction on top of the Institute. The factory closed down, the Benjamentas moved in, but it was contaminated, so the deer imagery still proliferated. So the Institute took that on board and reasserts it. In the top room, the man who had the factory had a tiny museum room, his private *Wunderkammer*. It's not important that you know this, but it underlays it all."

Another invisible presence in the film is Walser himself. A master of the undemonstrative and of self-effacement, as well as a habitual peripatetic who died while out walking, the writer is present in several details, even in a close-up of a bottle of Latschengeist schnapps. "Latschengeist is the spirit of the Wandering Pine. The guy on the label is the Wurtzelgraber – the root picker, or grabber. The schnapps is made of very small Alpine flowers. There's something

about that smallness. People are always looking for something to grab." Walser also looked for what was *minute*. So everything in this film is a portrait of Walser."

Working in both live-action and miniature has given the Quays a chance to take their illusionism into new areas. One scene shows a vast, ghostly gallery, but no such set existed. The Quays took a picture of a Bavarian cathedral they had visited, turned it upside down, and built up a composite from it; the resulting still, laden with ghostly vegetation, now looks as if you could invert it again and see it as a shot from 'Alien IV'. The invisible homage here is to the cathedral's architects – two more sets of brothers, the Asams and the Zimmermanns.

The image is a prime example of the film's impossible space, maze-like and infinitely extensible, but always turning in on itself – the sort conventionally referred to as Gothic. But the brothers insist, "It's not Gothic – Gothic has the wrong connotations for us. There's an English obsession with Gothic, and we're not English. If you go to a rococo church, it's not Gothic, it's Baroque. Baroque is much more painterly and imaginative. The idea of Baroque was to make the sheer materiality of concrete feel weightless. They did the greatest experiments with light and manipulation of space, learning from Bernini and all those people."

Space is certainly the most impressive aspect of *Institute Benjamin*. Its inhabitants and their language are another matter. As an unequivocal fan, I have to admit I find the film disappointing, although its ambition gives it a lot to live up to. What's extraordinary about their short films is the sense of machines and objects engaging autonomously, without recognisable human intervention – "bachelor machines", to use the surrealist phrase, playing their own games in the dark. These shorts, increasingly elusive affairs of shifting focus and barely perceptible movement, and of tremors set off by objects that have just vanished, attest to an apparent absence of manipulation that is in reality the very sign of that manipulation – the animator's invisible hand. (It wouldn't be difficult, if you were so inclined, to read them as statements of theological anxiety.)

They've used humans before, if only briefly: the curator who sets *Street of Crocodiles* in motion, or the dreaming woman in *The Comb*, an avatar of Lisa Benjamenta. But if *Institute Benjamin* disappoints, it's because of a sense of too-human actors invading so hermetic a world. Apart from the strikingly doll-like Mark Rylance, whose halting gestures, terrorised expression and galvanised hair make him a live reincarnation of the beleaguered mannequin hero of *Crocodiles*, the actors are recognisably human, and their words – largely taken from Walser – are too recognisably literary. The film is perhaps more expressive than it needs to be: at their best, the Quays' films display an iron faith in their own inscrutability. But unlike Borowczyk, the brothers are not planning to abandon animation for the live world. With *Institute Benjamin* they're only beginning to compare the possibilities of the two realms. Who knows what's yet to happen in that night museum? *'Institute Benjamin' opens on 17 November at the ICA*



THE FISH TANK – CIRCLES

The window in Lisa's room is a circle, as is the one that Lisa puts herself into when she talks about Kraus as the "perfect zero".

We made it a formal concern that the zero, the circle, would be inscribed throughout the imagery. In

this scene, Kraus, Lisa's Majordomo, is upstairs with the water. At the turn of the century, they used that technique of cooling the room by splashing the water and it would go down the walls. Lisa is being cooled by Kraus during this hour in which she's conjuring up her

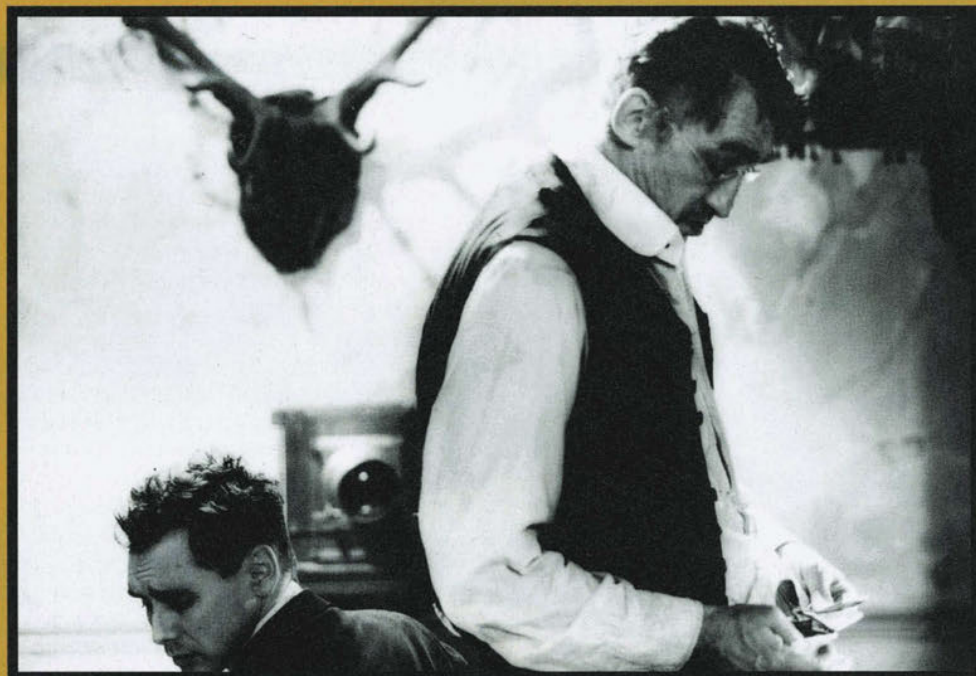
princeling, this figure from the beyond. She's conjuring up Jakob, who's in his orbit, running around the landscape – and this time, she snags him and he's there.

Kraus waits for that exact moment when the light comes round the building

and when it becomes that ray, he gets up, he knows it's time for the ritual to start – that's when he starts to slosh the water. That scene's almost a documentary about how the light invades the Institute.

At the beginning, we see a pronged fork – that's Kraus'

little device in his room, like a sensor. In the original script, we had a 'dandelion clock', a little magic box that Kraus had made himself from what he found at the Institute. In the end it became a little metaphysical machine – it registered increments of light.

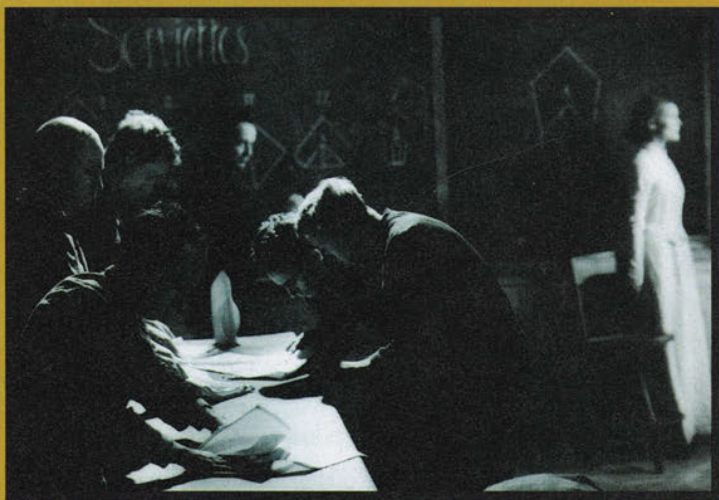


THE DEER MOTIF – HERR BENJAMENTA'S OFFICE

This was Herr Benjamenta's office where Jakob first presents himself. We carefully positioned the deer so that when Jakob placed himself, the antlers were coming out of his head. When Herr Benjamenta is measuring his head, he fantasizes that he has a young stag: he calls Jakob a "12-point", and measures the space between his antlers. He's been so contaminated he can only think in those terms. The students on the walls are framed with

antlers. The measuring is purely animalistic: all fodder that comes into this place, it's all good material. Instead of a CV he measures them. Of course, he also says, "Any distinguishing marks?" – as they did in the camps.

His room's like a deer museum. Even his drawer is full of deer pellets, carefully logged and annotated. There are whole sequences we documented about deer, which we didn't have time to get into – it would be a secondary film.



THE NAPKIN

This is Lisa giving a lesson in how to fold the famous "mitre" napkin. On one level, it's documentary – what do the students do at the Institute Benjamenta? – and the next thing, it turns into violent fantasy, as though Jakob imagined this. But it's a real napkin: in our research, we discovered that there was such an exercise, with directions for how to fold it. The shot starts framed without the window open – then you see Lisa standing like that, not realising the students are there practising, just looking totally lost.

THE GALLERY

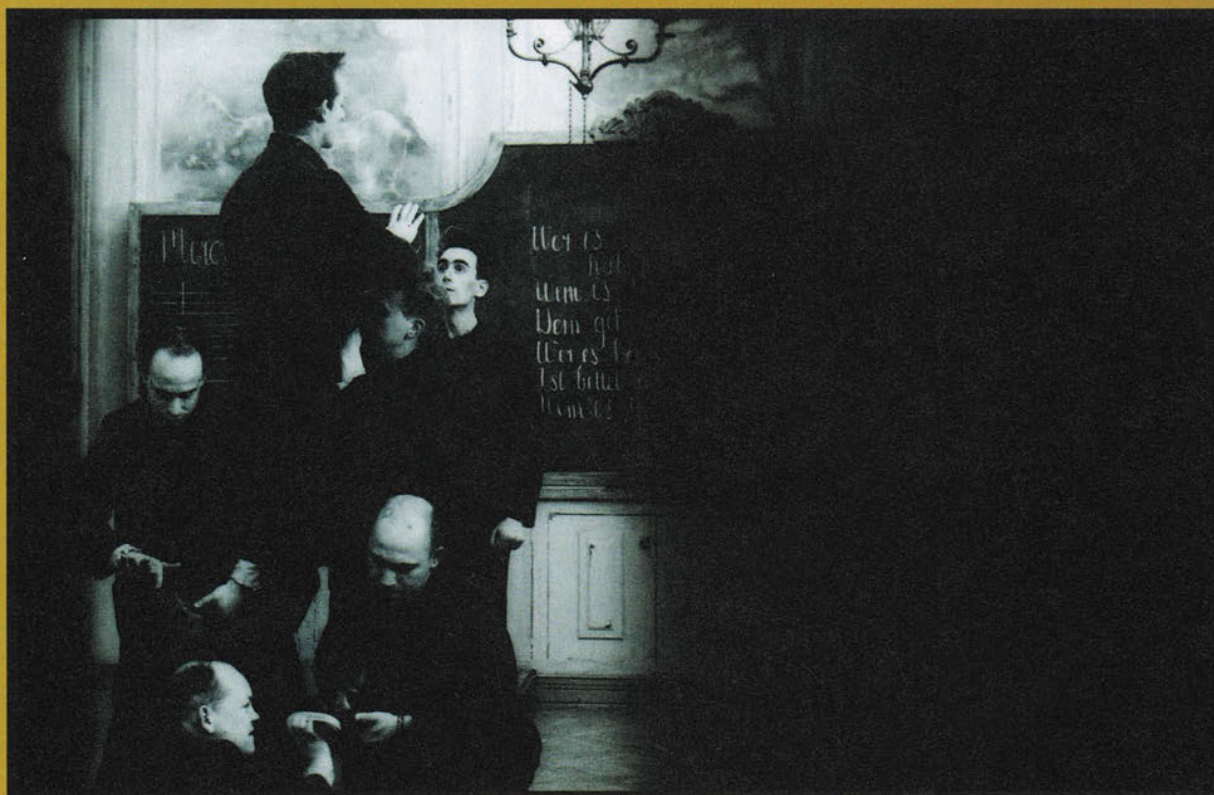
This is an inversion of a Bavarian cathedral, which we'd seen. It had to be a secret space outside Lisa's window. The whole thing's a model – we built it about a metre high, it's all made of photocopies and balsa wood. We had to make a composite shot, so we built the walkway and the walls, which are about seven feet high. The hole is real, with a real spiral staircase, and then matted in. We animated the light through it separately, and then The Mill [a digital effects and compositing house] took the live action and just brushed it in. It just shows what you can get away with.



THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE

The mere fact that Lisa should take Jakob deep inside her space should be a tactile experiment. He shouldn't be able to see it

with his eyes open, but to feel it – and it's also the way he has to feel her. She disorients him by turning upside down, just as the cathedral is upside down.



THE CLASSROOM

This is what Jakob sees when he enters the Institute, when Kraus conducts him towards Herr Benjamenta's office. As he looks through the hole in the door, he sees this one absurd image, of the Seven Dwarves as it were, almost as one unified shape – heads, arms all over the place, doing a grotesque scene. On the blackboard is the opening text, the riddle that opens the film – it's an anonymous piece of folk poetry that Carl Orff set to music in the 'Schulwerke', his works for children.

We had a workshop at the beginning and said to the actors, show us something like this – an image of absurdity so that Jakob could get a feeling of what he was in for. You need that image immediately followed by another one, of Kraus leading them like an orchestra conductor, all swaying anonymously and creaking.



WAITING FOR DREDD

Born in 1977 to thrive in the 80s, 'Judge Dredd' responded to Thatcherite and Reaganite politics. What happens to such an icon as he passes from comic-book to film? And what are the fans' expectations? By Martin Barker and Kate Brooks

More than 100,000 people have waited for over 15 years for *Judge Dredd*: there can't be many other films for which there has been that kind of anticipation. Fans of the comic book have been hearing rumours of a film since the late 70s. In the time since, they have played games with ideas for the film: who should, no, who *could* play Dredd? Which story would be best to adapt to film? What would Megacity One look like on celluloid? Above all, would the film dare to show Dredd's face? Every year at the UK Comic Art Convention the 2000AD panel would face the inevitable questions.

Now it has come. The Long Wait is ended. And the most remarkable thing we've found, in talking already to a good many fans, is *how much they all want it to succeed*. Still, the overwhelming response has been strongly proprietorial: accept Sly Stallone, accept seeing Dredd's face, even accept the inevitable touch of romance – inconceivable in the original comic – between Judges Dredd and Hershey. But please drokk, let it be a success. Why are they so keen for this? Partly, of course, so that Dredd and his comic vehicles will survive and grow. But perhaps there are other more interesting and noble instincts at work: to spread the word, to share the pleasures, and – perhaps most of all – to see the “sheer epicness” of the story enacted in the medium for which it was surely intended.

It's too soon to say how present and former fans of 2000AD will respond to the film, let alone whether *Dredd* will hold its own against the



likes of *Batman Forever* (its most serious challenger), *Waterworld* (by all the signs destined for turkey roast) and *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie*. It certainly won't be for want of trying. A megabudget for publicity has very much put the movie about: bus-shelter campaigns, press opportunities, even a travelling roadshow of Dredd vehicles. And it goes beyond the usual kitbag of merchandising: there are T-shirts (“Suck my glove, punk!”), chocolate bars, pencils, *Dredd*-shaped soap, a book of the film, a comic of the film, a giveaway mini-comic, a promised Judge Dredd cake (“ – trust there's nothing illegal in its ingredients, citizen –”) and an “educational package” sent to every school for GCSE media studies teachers, to go with a much-repeated BBC schools programme, on the marketing of, yes, *Judge Dredd*: a pack produced with the “full co-operation” of the film production company. Remarkable. It's lucky we don't hold to the pessimistic beliefs of the Frankfurt School about the circuit of produced and controlled pleasures of mass consumption.

Still, there *are* things to be asked and explored here. Just what is it that happens as *Judge Dredd* passes from its comic origins to the world of Showcase cinema? *Dredd*, as most people know by now, began its life in the second issue (“Prog Two”) of the British comic 2000AD in 1977. 2000AD was a product of a crisis in the British comic industry. Since the 50s, that industry had produced and reproduced formulaic copies and spin-offs of a few originals,

among them the Reverend Marcus Morris' *Eagle and Girl*. The rise of TV, pop music, the 60s earthquakes in youth cultures and the sheer exhaustion of the formulae meant that by the early 70s sales had slipped desperately near and even below break-even. Fleetway responded more bravely as a company than D. C. Thomson (who have today all but abandoned comics beyond the *Beano*). First they put out *Battle*, a hard-edged World War Two comic; then the "dangerous" *Action*, which pillaged from the period's most popular films (*Jaws* and *Rollerball*, for example), creating "punk" versions of the stories; and then in a sideways move to deflect the wall of criticism that followed, the future-critical world of *2000AD*.

Within a very short time, *2000AD* made itself into an icon with which a number of pop groups associated themselves. *I AM THE LAW* T-shirts appeared on *Top of the Pops*, alongside songs on the same theme. This happened not simply because of the brilliance of the conceptions of Pat Mills, John Wagner, Alan Grant and such early artists as Brian Bolland, but also because of a slippage inside Fleetway. For a time, editorial control operated virtually like a fan club. The result was an anarchic playing with story-ideas, artwork, and forms of presentation. *2000AD* at this time sang like a taut wire with the cynicism of young people's responses to the Thatcherite 'revolution'. And nowhere, perhaps, more effectively than *Judge Dredd*.

The more gargantuan Dredd became, the more the fans loved him. When artist Mike McMahon had trouble drawing ordinary-sized boots on him, so that he became vastly club-footed, it only added to the joy. "A brick shit-house with a helmet on": one fan's apt summary of the Judge.

The world of *Judge Dredd* is a deeply paradoxical one. Here is a consumerist nightmare, with gameshow hosts who will literally kill you if you get a question wrong, with beauty products and plastic surgery to make you ugly – and



a global competition for one-ton heroic fatties, in a world where food is desperately short. Conceived by Carlos Ezquerra as Metropolis rendered by Gaudi, Megacity One is a claustrophobic, teeming, urban nightmare, where all citizens are potential perpetrators, where the line between guilt and innocence is determined only by the Judges, and where Dredd judges without mercy.

It was, of course, crucial to the success of Dredd that he is within the epic frame of 'America'. The dream-land of dreams has so long provided us with scenarios for futurity: land of freedom, home of the brave, refuge of the oppressed, world of technology, nightmare of crime, cityscapes of misery. Dredd's version of this was extraordinary. For the comic readers, there are various pleasures to be found in Megacity One: the in-jokes (City Block names from politics and popular culture, Bet Lynch Block being a particular favourite); the risky story-lines (one, on the Jolly Green Giant, got the comic into bad trouble); the general feeling that the comic was a secret satire.

And there was this sense that, like a vast off-frame space behind the comic panels, somewhere out there in strange corners of the Megacity, there was an infinity of stories wait-

ing to burst through. Many of them hardly featured Dredd at all – he might arrive incidentally at the end to arrest or blow away the central figures, but mostly the strip was about their crumbling, bizarre lives in this most post-modern world. We just saw, week by week, fragments of this exploding city, policed to death by the machine that was Dredd.

And that was the point. Consumerist nightmare aside, Megacity One enacted the *Daily Mail*'s recurring nightmare of an urban future of multi-pop-cultural street anarchy. The slightest lifting of the oppressive lid, and the whole lot would go up. Dredd the lawman acts like a machine: his occasional doubts (when faced with, for instance, a "democracy movement") were like small malfunctions before steady state was restored. Which side the readers were on was a matter of genuine doubt.

How on earth do you translate that to film? It's not easy, one reason why it took so long. When Charles Lippincott (who had made his name with his marketing of *Star Wars*) finally took the plunge in 1988, the problems were just beginning. Read the book *The Making of Judge Dredd*. A remarkable document, it reveals just how deep the fears ran that *Dredd* might end up a fascist film. Avoiding that cost its creators more than a year, and some ten script versions.

It certainly is a problem. In *2000AD*, there are layers of irony interposed just by virtue of its "comic-bookness". Drawing styles intervene between us and the characters; there is always 'on-screen' narration; the episodic nature of the stories means that each narrative is one in a open-ended line. Film just doesn't work like that. It takes real work to stop a narrative feeling closed and complete. Acting may not be simply naturalistic, but Hollywood facetiousness of the "Hasta la vista, baby" variety might not be enough to secure the film against criticism. Making *Dredd* was never going to be easy.

It's a problem accentuated by the virtual failure of the comics in America. There have ►

Strange transformations: Sylvester Stallone as 'Judge Dredd', in Danny Cannon's film, left; Dredd and Rico in the film, above left; the story which provides the main basis for the Dredd film was an early, minor one. Unlike the film, Dredd does know that Rico is his brother, and is ready for him, above right; Rico's surgical adaptation to vacuum makes him both vile and pitiable – the central paradox of so many Dredd stories, right



◀ been several attempts, from the mid-1980s, to launch Dredd there, first through Quality Comics, most recently through DC Comics. DC seem most likely to succeed, not least because of the association with the film. But – perhaps wisely – they have written whole new stories rather than reprinting the British originals. And there is a crucial but hard-to-define difference which, if it can be placed at all, lies in *how we know whose side we are on*. In the British stories, there is a deep, ironic ambivalence about Dredd. In the American stories, there's no doubt he's a hero. The same, sadly, is true of the film. It is just too easy to be on Dredd's side.

If we are honest, we are uneasy about the film. Certainly the first 45 minutes are just glorious. And it is to director Danny Cannon's credit that in the end it actually feels *right* that Dredd takes off his helmet. The setting is splendidly evoked. The city is the right kind of ferment. It doesn't matter that there are echoes of previous sci-fi films, from *Star Wars* to *Battlestar Galactica* to *Blade Runner*: it's even a good thing. Cannon sought and achieved a mock-Roman Senate look, with an admixture of *Ben-Hur* and other epics; and it works. Stallone is admirable as Dredd. His stiff visual presence, carapace musculature, deep grunting voice and almost unfocused eyes serve perfectly to evoke the machine. Watch the perfect moment of this, as he recounts his loss of his best friend (who returns as the ultimate villain, and is revealed to be his brother). Hershey to Dredd: "Haven't you ever had a friend?" "Yes. Once." "What happened...?" "I *judged* him." The last line is epiphanic in its quality. Brilliant.

Also brilliant in the first half are the little touches, such as the robotic go-kart that trundles, almost unseen, behind Dredd as he and Hershey attend a block riot. "Eat recycled food," it chunters, as it careers pointlessly down corridors – only to be 'arrested' by Dredd. Such mini-narratives make the comic what it is: they're central by virtue of their being incidental.

The difficulties arise when the film seeks to humanise Dredd. It is as if Cannon, a fan of *2000AD* since his childhood, is *too* in love with his subject. In the Press Preliminary Notes, he writes: "I didn't want audiences merely to be dazzled by the special effects, I wanted them to connect with the characters, with their lives. With the storyline we developed, and the actors we cast in the roles, you truly feel the jeopardy with the characters; you really care what happens to them." Which ain't the comic, of course. And in the film this caring is achieved at a cost. After those wonderful establishing scenes, the film departs to another sector. The street life – so central to everything in the comic – recedes. The seething citizens, the "perps", become a backdrop, a manipulable but distant mass. The film enters a world of conspiracies. Rico, Dredd's genetic brother, becomes pure Evil Villain with appropriate Evil Chuckle, returning not just to destroy Dredd for 'judging' him, but to seek world domination – as if *anyone* could dominate the mess that is Megacity One!

The oppositions within the film now take on more overtly political meanings. Rico to Dredd: "We're here to achieve the same thing: an ordered society... The only difference between



us is that you destroyed life to embrace the law, whereas I destroyed the law to embrace life." By the end of the film, Dredd has rediscovered the life within himself, has become more human and less of a law machine, no longer simply the embodiment of order. "My whole life's a lie," he grunts, as he uncovers the deep conspiracy to create a genetic super-race, a conspiracy of which he himself is a product and a victim. You just can't help but *care* for Dredd...

And you *have* to loathe Rico. He's not been degraded enough by his time in the penal colony to make you even half-pity him, while his philosophy is pure fascism: "We are guilty of being human when we could have been gods!" he yells at Dredd, as he seeks to activate the genetic super-clones with which he will take over the Justice Department. Too much of the latter half of the film takes place within such 'corridors of power': above the heads of the Megacity masses both thematically and filmically. The camera roams down tunnels and enters womb-like chambers within the Hall of Justice; the chase sequence takes place in the air, at times resembling a computer game. The dangerous, crowded streets hardly appear; when they do, opportunities go begging. Dredd at one point almost crashes to the ground when his 'anti-gravity' Lawmaster IV motorbike malfunctions. In the comic, he'd have fixed a dozen citizens to Holding Posts for obstructing his passage. In the film he just missiles over their heads, making them duck and cover.

Is this just an issue about this particular adaptation, or does it have wider resonance? We think the latter. The history of comic/film relationships is more complex than Mike Atkinson's article (*Sight and Sound*, July 1995) allows. Though he is right about the difficult impact the 2-D gravity-busting possibilities of comics have on screen aesthetics, he reads history too much backwards from the present. We are in the middle of a wave of comic book adaptations, from *The Punisher* to *Tank Girl*. This is because of a desperate need in the current film industry for trailed concepts: that is, characters and scenarios whose capacity to speak to audiences is known in advance. The risks on big-budget movies are now so great that it is simply essential to test their likely success beforehand. Comic books allow that testing, and are being increasingly raided for their filmic potentials. But this is changing the comic industry more than the film business.

Ironically, the relevant history of both industries dates from the decade, the 1890s, when the first regular strip, *The Yellow Kid*, appeared in a New York newspaper and the first moving picture was shot. The industries met with the first cartoons. But it was actually comics which first displayed that a character-concept could be the basis of substantial licensing. By 1908, *Buster Brown* was endorsing a range of merchandise of which any modern film company would stand in awe. (In Britain, the process had started even earlier, via the figure of *Ally Sloper*.) However, it took a combination of factors to drive the two industries into parallel. First was the recognition of the market for films for young people; second, the rise of the adventure strip in the late 1920s, arising from King Features' demand for syndicable story-lines and Hollywood's move into the production of serials.

By the 1950s, a large two-way movement was underway, with comics offering its most mythic characters (centrally, of course, Batman and Superman) to radio, TV and film. At the same time, one or two comic book companies specialised in doing 'cover versions' of predicted box-office successes. Dell and Gold Key alone covered more than 150 films in a ten-year period, adapting everything from *The Way the West Was Won* to *The Mummy*. There were also uncountable Western adaptations, from film and TV. Looking back, it is fair to say that no one particularly worried about the *politics* of such characters or stories – they were so overwhelmingly 'American' no problem could possibly arise – and certainly no one bothered about the rival aesthetics of films and comics.

However there were moments which brought the issue of visual potential to the fore. During the 1930s, for instance, it was the fad for comic-strip advertisements. The newspaper strip revealed to commercial companies the power of narrative as a carrier for ideas, and how it could be linked up with endorsement. In the 1950s, when comics for a brief time escaped censorious control, they held up to film-makers new modes of story-telling. Notoriously EC Comics experimented with the filmic possibilities of panels. Just one example: Bernie Krigstein, in his extraordinary *Master Race*, married a mini-study of the psychology of fascism with an

array of experimental visual effects. In one panel, he evoked the visual confusion of watching a metro train accelerate past a puzzled man's eyes. These glorious results were learnt from not only by the Underground artists of the 60s, but by such film-makers as Hitchcock.

There were subsidiary histories, too. *Classics Illustrated* developed their line of comic-book adaptations of great novels and plays after 1941. After their collapse in 1970, their inheritance passed into the hands of Marvel Comics, who in the 70s not only did a series of Classics adaptations but also took on the mantle of Dell and Gold Key. Marvel served up melodramatised renderings of such films as *Indiana Jones*, and kept the stories alive by telling new tales, which then returned to TV and film as *Young Indiana Jones*. The circle was completing and returning onto itself. This was the inevitable outcome of the emergence of the new corporate giants. Marvel changed hands several times among film-related companies. DC Comics was taken over by Warner.

The great hunt for concepts was on. Some were found by accident. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was such a concept, launching from a spoof underground platform into the mainstream. (But with *Turtles*, faithfulness to the original was never an issue.) It was inevitable that Dredd would be discovered. In some ways he was filmed *before* he was discovered. *RoboCop* owes so much to the concept of Dredd the machine-like lawman that it delayed the filming of *Dredd* himself by seven years.

Finally, a significant difficulty with *Judge Dredd* is just how much the stories owe to their original Thatcherite and Reaganite context of production. Dredd is only Dredd because he is the opposite of punks on the street – in whom we half-recognise ourselves. We are the power-



less, resentful 'enemy within' whom Thatcher attacked. The comic transposes us to 'America' to play out the futuristic drama of the complete realisation of Thatcherite law and order politics, on a world scale. Dredd *must* be both hero and villain, and Hollywood just can't do that.

It would probably be better if they didn't try. When they intrude a conscious politics into their films, there is an overpowering smell of burnt good intentions. There is something horribly, terribly wrong in the Press Notes when they try hard to summarise the world of Joe Dredd: "The Judge Dredd universe represents a totalitarian response to rising crime and a vision of the results of loss of nationalism." Loss of what!??? 2000AD and Dredd were global Reaganism, to the extent that both Thatcher and

Reagan actually appeared in muffled, satirical form in the stories themselves. And the comic's fans knew it well.

Judge Dredd 2 is at the starting gate, awaiting box office returns on number one. Even before seeing the first, the fans are talking about sequels, eagerly anticipating seeing, computer-enhanced onto the screen, the hideous quartet of "Dark Judges" (especially Judge Death: "The crime iss life, the ssentence iss DEATH!"), or the radioactive panorama of the Cursed Earth and its bizarre, dangerous "mutant" inhabitants. Will *Judge Dredd 2* make it? Will the compromises enable Stallone to wrench the strings of "poignancy" (his word) in enough American viewers? On that, judgement deferred...

'Judge Dredd' opened on 21 July



Dreddful expectations: Rico and Dredd from the comic, above left; a scene from the film, above; a scene in the comic book, far left; reverse anachronisms like this, left, are central to so much '2000AD' humour. Dredd means it deadly seriously. We the readers know the sly pop-culture reference. With the absent panel, Dredd virtually walks off the page. The final panel is like a giant crane-shot, re-establishing Dredd as a 'giant on the streets'. All comic-book artwork for 'Judge Dredd' © Egmont Foundation 1995. All rights reserved. Script: Pat Mills. Artwork: Mike McMahon



Growing up in Paris and competing in the Olympics, Jeanne Rucar later met and married Luis Buñuel. Is she present in his films? And what kind of woman was she? B. Ruby Rich reflects on these questions and on her meetings with Jeanne in Mexico

● Jeanne Rucar de Buñuel. A famous name, an unknown woman, an untold story. The films of Luis Buñuel, so prized in the 70s, fell out of fashion in recent years. Interest was correspondingly slight in the woman who was his wife for 50 years and outlived him by more than a decade, cloistered inside their once-modern house in Mexico City, surrounded by mementoes and memories of her life with Buñuel, half guard, half prisoner.

Now that Miramax is launching the theatrical re-release of *Belle de jour* (and retaining remake rights) after years of distribution limbo that made it unavailable in the US, maybe Buñuel's reputation will get a boost and his films come back into fashion. Then these words might help write Jeanne back into the story and accord her a proud place in cinema history – or, at the very least, lead to a view of her husband's films different from the one that has prevailed up till now. For evidence suggests that Jeanne Rucar de Buñuel was not only Buñuel's wife but also his muse, the secret model for the women of innocent mien and perverse desire who move so magically through his films and come, so frequently, to no good end.

In the annals of film scholarship, which would seem to have explored every possible approach to films and their makers, adequately if not excessively, there's a vacuum. Pile up the interviews with directors, screenwriters, actors and actresses, and the stack's impressive. Few indeed, however, are the words recovered from the wives and widows and lovers of directors: their memories are fading with them, their secrets, unsought and unprized, perilously close to disappearance. Fortunately, Jeanne's are the exception.

As luck would have it, she published her memoirs. The Mexican anthropologist Marisol Martín del Campo, a feminist and expert interviewer, made Jeanne's acquaintance through a mutual friend with the express purpose of recording her stories. *Memories of a Woman Without a Piano* (*Memorias de una mujer sin piano*) was the result. Published in a limited edition in Spanish in 1990, the slim volume was passed from hand to hand. It arrived in New York courtesy of the late scholar Paul Lenti, who'd returned triumphantly from the Guadalajara Film Festival clutching it like a trophy. And no wonder. Here in the dispassionate tones of one long since subjugated was a record of the conquest: a modern French woman defeated by a Spanish conquistador, who professionally

mined the subjectivity he prohibited her from expressing. I was astounded by the anecdotes collected there and their implications.

"Welcome to the bar of Luis Buñuel" were the words that welcomed me when I finally made my pilgrimage to the residence on Cerrado Felix Cuevas to meet the woman whose existence I'd discovered in those pages. Jeanne opened the gate herself, then invited me into the room that she herself was long forbidden to enter. "Go to your room, Jeanne" were the words she was accustomed to hearing from her beloved Luis. But he was gone. Now she delighted in holding court in that self-same salon, giddy with a still-palpable spirit of transgression.

What was she like? Nothing like her husband. She was fanciful and adventurous, a simple housewife about whom nothing was simple. She was simultaneously spry and frail, with something about her that was hauntingly familiar. We'd never met, yet I'd have spotted her anywhere: her trim figure and dynamic energy and aura of innocent delight were all familiar from countless screenings of Buñuel films. I realised that I was in the presence of the very thing that Buñuel had striven so mightily and successfully to conceal: the proof that his cinematic inventions did not spring whole from his imagination and that his films were far more autobiographical than anyone ever imagined. The critic Jean-Andre Fieschi once claimed that Buñuel's works were phenomenally accessible to deciphering, offering up five categories of basic inquiry: "Spain (the eternal), Aragón's childhood, Surrealism, religion and psychoanalysis". A good start, but no longer a finish. Amend to six and add: "Jeanne (the eternal)".

Do not expect a secret code. There's no smoking gun here, no seismic revelation disclosed after hours of chatting, no sudden disclosure that it was Jeanne who actually wrote the scripts or edited the footage. Not at all. Instead, there's an accumulation of clues, details, nuances. Feelings and traces. Bits that don't fit together, like some determinedly surrealist portrait that's more fragmentation than whole. What can be revealed here is that Buñuel was a secret tyrant whose public face of antibourgeois anarchism concealed a domestic life of bourgeois regulation and sadistic authoritarianism. He enforced a marital order that Martín del Campo rightly termed "apartheid" and kept his wife away from a world which might

recognise her with the same kind of determination with which he withheld from us, in *Belle de jour*, the contents of the "Asiatic" client's fascinatingly mysterious box. Jeanne Rucar de Buñuel, full of lacunae and denials, was the wellspring of his work, the box we weren't permitted to see inside.

On that day in 1991, she poured shots of tequila, showed off the mischievous toys she collected, brought out photographs of the sons and grandchildren she adored, and reminisced about old friends, dinners, visits, the nature of her marriage, all the while oblivious to her effect on her visitors. The hard part was persuading her to talk about herself: she exhibited all the signs of self-denial and emotionless recall of horrific events that today would set off an "abused woman" alarm. She recounted many of her book's central tales. Survivor of more than 50 years of the most intimate psychological torture, she retained a spirit of joy and delight and an utter disregard for her own powers. She was still the fresh and fanciful spirit that must have captivated Buñuel those many years ago and so influenced him and his movies (despite her protestations to the contrary when asked). The interpretation offered here, then, is a panoply of shards, based upon personal encounters and readings of texts and films. It's an exercise in revisionist history and cinematic sleuthing, fuelled by an ur-feminist passion to right the wrong of Jeanne's erasure.

Jeanne Rucar grew up in Paris in the shadow of World War One. She was adventurous and, owing partly to indifferent scholastic performance, ended up in a gymnasium for girls. A photo in her memoirs shows a young sprite of a girl in a toga-like costume, exercising in the open air, the picture of health, strength, and self-reliance. She studied gymnastics with Irene Poppart and even competed in the 1924 Paris Olympics, winning a bronze medal. Gymnastics! The very word inspires fantasies of the modern French woman at the start of the twentieth century. Her great memories of that time are of the American contestant who won the hearts of Paris: Johnny Weismuller. She adored Tarzan, thought him the sexiest man alive, and half a century later could still hug herself with excitement at the memory of Weismuller.

By the age of 17, she was teaching gymnastics to girls in a communist school outside Paris. (Ominously, her family thought her "stupid," but her godfather eloquently defended her, and kept such

MEET JEANNE BUÑUEL

charges at bay.) She played the piano, had friendships with both men and women, numerous suitors, and a love of roaming the city – landing one fateful day in the studio of a Spanish artist friend.

The story of the meeting of Jeanne Rucar and Luis Buñuel is so symbolic that, were she not there to tell it herself, it would sound apocryphal. She and two girlfriends were visiting the studio of their friend Hernando Vines when a young Spaniard newly arrived in Paris showed up. Assuming that all unaccompanied women must be prostitutes (a typical Spanish point of view for the time, according to Jeanne), he took the painter aside to offer some sort of aphrodisiac powder to arouse the girls' passions, only to be told by an outraged Vines that these were decent women from good families. Corrected, he switched tactics and instead began courting her. She was everything that he was not. Had France and Spain ever before been joined in such unlikely union? Thus was the Buñuelian duality of virgin/prostitute established at the very beginning. Reader, he married her.

Well, eventually. First came an eight-year courtship, during which time Buñuel's jealousy began to exhibit itself. Once he went away for a period of time and insisted she socialise only with two of his Spanish friends (he didn't trust French men), one of whom was Salvador Dalí. Jeanne laughed at the memory of Luis thinking her safe with Dalí. Instead, Dalí wasted no time drawing her into a discussion of whether or not there was an afterlife, then proposed his solution to the mystery: he'd strangle her and she could come back and tell him if there was one. Jeanne retaliated by proposing the reverse, but Dalí declined; she wondered if his posthumous failure to deliver the verdict signified an answer or if he'd just forgotten the promise.

Jeanne discovered that Buñuel's jealousy was sparked not only by the proximity of other men but by any activity in which she engaged independently of him, especially if it might attract others' attention. Visiting her gymnasium class one day, he complained of the indecency of her showing her bare legs and insisted she stop. Next was her piano playing, which he forbade her to do in public. These weren't simply the period values of a macho concerned with public appearance. Buñuel had very stern rules for private behaviour as well. When they went to movies together, he'd hold a

finger under her eye to check for tears: he detested crying at the movies, and eventually cured her of crying altogether. She explained that, to this day, she was unable to shed a tear.

They married in 1933, even though French film-maker Jean Epstein, for whom Buñuel had worked as an assistant, advised Jeanne against it. During the Spanish Civil War, the Buñuels left Europe; sent to the US by the Republic to do a film on the war, they moved first to New York, then Los Angeles, and eventually to Mexico. Their first child Juan-Luis was born in Paris, their second Raphael in the United States. In *Conversaciones con Buñuel*, historian Max Aub reported an event from the early 40s when Buñuel was working at the Museum of Modern Art. The MOMA staff were so puzzled by his solo appearance at all social functions that department head Iris Barry finally decided to question him. Perhaps she settled on the most logical explanation for the US at the time, or just wanted to provoke him into telling the truth: she asked if his wife was black. After that, he brought Jeanne to meet them – once.

From country to country, whatever the local mores, his treatment of her was consistent in its possessiveness, repression, and control, all in the guise of the perfect bourgeois couple. In 1946, they settled in Mexico City where they would remain, except for travel for film productions or festivals. Luis and Jeanne were inseparable until his death in 1983, rarely apart, unless you count her absence from his film shoots which she was banned from visiting as rigorously as from his bar. *My Last Sigh* illustrates the contradictory treatment which he accorded Jeanne. He included her in his life to such an extent that the memoir bears a dedication to Jeanne, "my wife, my companion". Yet he took her so for granted and valued her so little that she's barely mentioned in the book's text; instead, he writes of being "old and alone".

"[His] misogyny is disguised by the deceptive virtues of virginity, honour, and faith. But little by little we realise that ... (his) marriage is one long vendetta against his wife, whom he would like to degrade, destroy, and condemn, in her turn, to hell." That's Carlos Fuentes, describing the character of El's Francisco in *Myself With Others* but the analysis is as apt of Buñuel's own marriage and character. Buñuel seems to have been unable to tolerate any expression of Jeanne's own subjectivity (or, one assumes, sexuality). Any evidence of ►

Dali wasted no time drawing her into a discussion of whether or not there was an afterlife, then proposed his solution to the mystery: he'd strangle her and she could come back and tell him if there was one

◀ the existence of such a realm of subjectivity – by definition outside his control – had to be tracked down, policed, exterminated. Such was the task he set himself throughout their marriage.

On the surface, then, Luis Buñuel was the archetypal Spanish patriarch, ruling his family with an iron hand, enforcing the domestic regulations of his regime. Jeanne was the quintessential French bourgeois wife, proud of her cooking and her maintenance of the household, devoted to her two sons and her husband. She described her husband as a “classic macho” who needed to have a “child-wife” to feel secure, while she appeared to be comfortable being ruled. Under the surface, however, lay a grimmer scenario of psychological torment with a genius for detail.

Was she courageous? No. Commended for her valour in writing her memoir, she declined the credit, denying that it took courage: “Luis was already dead. He couldn’t read what I wrote.” And would she have written it if Luis had still been alive? “Oh no, I couldn’t have!” She recounted as proof of her cowardice the two incidents that stood out in her memory as the very worst of her husband’s cruelties from all their years together: the case of the cherry tree and the case of the piano, the latter giving her book its title.

Jeanne took great pride in the cherry tree she’d coaxed to grow outside their house in Mexico City: “I had the only one! The fruit was so delicious.” It gave her tremendous pleasure right up to the day she heard Buñuel give an order to their gardener: “Pull out that tree.” He pulled up the cherry tree, and that was that.

The same fate befell her beloved upright piano, which harked back to days of playing in Paris, a private echo of her once-public recitals. She kept the piano in the vestibule and played every day, particularly enjoying playing the ‘Internationale’ when they had guests. One night, however, a drunken friend proposed to Buñuel that he trade him the piano for three bottles of champagne. Jeanne barely had time to laugh at the outrageous offer before Buñuel declared “Done!” Though the two men shook hands on the deal, she was sure it was all a joke – until the next morning when the friend turned up sober, with moving truck and champagne, and calmly hauled away her prize possession. Later, Buñuel felt guilty and bought her, not another piano, but his choice of instrument: an accordion.

Any gesture by Jeanne in the direction of self-expression or fulfilment displeased Buñuel – and generally was halted. When she became interested in book-binding and started classes to learn to make books by hand, he came up with excuses for her to stop: the classes ran too late, the city streets weren’t safe. When she invited her women friends to visit on rare occasions, he insisted they leave, complaining like a small child jealous of his mother’s attention (but a child capable of enforcing his wish with the authority of a patriarch).

Even a thoroughly subjugated wife, however, can retain traces of selfhood and imagination that find expression despite total prohibition. Penelope Gilliatt did a profile of Buñuel for the *New Yorker* in 1977 and noted in passing that “Mme Buñuel sat quietly on the sofa doing needlework.” Ah, if only she’d looked closer! She might have seen what it was that Jeanne was inscribing in the needlework. My favourite was framed on the wall

the day I visited: it pictured a banquet table that had, at its centre, the figure of a naked woman offered up for the meal. Seated all around were animals and devils of varying shapes and hues, forks aloft, ready to eat her. In the lower right-hand corner was the tiny figure of another naked woman, on all fours, begging for scraps. Another of her framed needlepoints, also a composition of her own design, depicted a naked woman as a beast of burden, drawing a cart with an animal master aboard.

Can there be any doubt how deeply Jeanne influenced Buñuel and his films, despite her own protestations to the contrary – that he never discussed his work with her, so she couldn’t have? Was Jeanne simply following in her husband’s footsteps, adapting his surreal vision to the feminised world of representation that needlepoint embodies? I think not. The vision is too original, her creations too numerous, her glee in their invention too passionate to pass as mere homage or imitation. The needlework, rather, is a rare concrete manifestation of the spirit of adventure and sensuality that she always embodied but rarely got to claim. Like her husband, she enjoyed jokes. She surrounded herself with toys that amused her, gifts sent by her sons in Los Angeles and Paris, electronic gadgets that yelled insults in Spanish slang or simulated the sound of glass shattering. Whimsy was part of her personality. A colleague of mine at a recent conference recounted a story of Jeanne’s canasta-playing habits, told to her by a Spanish refugee friend who belonged to the same Mexico City card club and wanted to describe how mischievous and funny Jeanne could be. It seems she always removed her girdle during their card games, but accomplished the trick so discreetly that no amount of card-player surveillance could ever catch her in the act. Sooner or later, in every game, Jeanne would call out “ta-da” and wave the girdle in the air, triumphant once again. She liked to be naughty, mystifying me by asking if I were married before showing off her toy: a brown-robed friar whose robe lifted when his erection was triggered by a button in his back. “Can you see it?” She laughed with delight.

Jeanne inhabited an interior world of sensitivity and sensuality, its expression fleetingly glimpsed through the tiny fissures she was able to chip in the wall of repression Buñuel had built around her, a modern version of a mediaeval tower. Ironically, it seems doubtful that she felt any value in herself apart from Luis or their children. Even as she related chilling tales of her oppression at his hands, she’d reiterate her love for him and his love for her, emphasising that she wouldn’t have wanted her life to be any different. Then she’d advance to the next tale of horror with such equanimity that it almost seemed as if she was describing someone else’s life.

If meeting Jeanne after a lifetime of Buñuelian cinema was a disorienting experience, then returning to those films after knowing her was odder still. Why had I never noticed how often he used French actresses? Jeanne Moreau, Catherine Deneuve, Delphine Seyrig. Was it only because of French production terms? Or was the casting the inevitable product of his source, the translation of Jeanne back into her own nationality? Once the connection between the Fuentes description and Buñuel’s life has been established, others present

She thought she could have started to live her own life, finally, for the first time, after he died. Alas, soon after, she began to go blind. “Sometimes I think that Luis sent this blindness to me to keep me in the house after he was gone”

themselves for consideration. The detail of the pills foisted surreptitiously on Viridiana by her lustful uncle to undo her chastity presents just such an uncanny connection, offering virtually a rerun of Buñuel's original intentions back in the artist studio where he first met Jeanne.

The consistent theme in Buñuel's oeuvre of the woman who appears to be one thing (virtuous, virginal, maternal) while in reality being another (bad, sexual, perverse) makes the invariably suspect practice of reading back from the work itself to the life as lived by the author, in this case, virtually irresistible. Could it be that his patriarchal attempt to control his wife's every thought and action reflected this very belief that woman's nature was a dual one: innocent only if enforced, guilty otherwise? Perhaps he saw Jeanne as his very own "belle de jour", a woman posing as a respectable bourgeois housewife yet one whose intrinsic nature would lead her quickly and inevitably into the enactment of unacceptable sexual desires.

Jeanne did sometimes verbally express her sexual curiosity: what other men might be like in bed, what other races would be like, and so on. Her sexual escapades were entirely verbal, mild, and strikingly innocent, as in her favourite anecdote of the time that, new to Mexico City, she complained at a party that the house had no "cojones" (a slang term for men's balls) when she meant "cojines" (pillows). On the other hand, perhaps Buñuel simply never got over his initial confusion of the honourable Parisian girl with a prostitute; instead of blaming his own Spanish provincialism, he blamed woman's nature.

In *That Obscure Object of Desire*, Buñuel carried this notion of the binary female to an extreme by literally casting two different actresses in the central role. Video artist Joan Braderman used to regale me with wonderful stories of her class screenings of the film, at which the young men in the class – to her and their female colleagues' amazement – inevitably failed to notice that two entirely different women had been enacting the part. If Buñuel couldn't reconcile virtue and sexuality in the female body on screen, then what of life itself? Jeanne once said that she regretted never having had a daughter, but reconsidered: "Given what Luis was like, so strict, she would have turned out to be either a nun or a prostitute."

The interlocking structures of psychology on- and off-screen are not easily delineated or extricated from one another: the penalty for doing the job badly is a humiliating fall into the most vulgar interpretation, psychobiography at its worst, film criticism at its most literal. I realise I run the risk of just such charges. But what are we to make of Jeanne's friend Silvia Pinal in the character of Viridiana, who arrives from the convent and almost immediately finds herself in the barn receiving instruction on how to milk a cow? Laughing, squeamish, sexually vulnerable, she giggles with embarrassment while a close-up shows her hand tentatively stroking the phallic teat, making the obvious connection. Then she's laughing out loud with a delight that echoed Jeanne's tone so precisely that I half expected to see a little brown-robed monk pop up from behind the cow.

Perhaps the echoes are merely surreal, random fragments devoid of psychological significance. Or



Pulling together the threads: Jeanne Rucar de Buñuel's surrealist needlework

perhaps they are Surreal, full of psychoanalytic codifications, however much Buñuel the director hated such inferences. Perhaps the patriarch of Surrealism needed his private regime of fascism to guard himself, at every turn, against the dangerous force of a female power he clearly feared. Jeanne Rucar de Buñuel, a wonderfully free spirit, full of life, quirky and unpredictable, may well have paid for the sins of which Buñuel judged her gender guilty, however innocent she herself may have been.

On his deathbed, Buñuel told the priest that he wanted Jeanne to die first: what would she do without him? Jeanne admitted that his words stuck her as more curse than consolation. She thought she could have started to live her own life, finally, for the first time, after he died. Alas, soon after, she began to go blind. "Sometimes I think that Luis sent this blindness to me to keep me in the house after he was gone." Devastated by her loss of sight, she began to refuse offers to go out for dinners or social gatherings. "How can I eat with people, blind like this?" she'd complain. Even her beloved friend Silvia Pinal, was unable to convince her to attend a Buñuel tribute.

She became a recluse, hiding herself inside the house she once had longed to escape. In 1991 when we first met, she still had some of her sight; by the time of my return in 1994, even that was gone. Inside the house she knew so well, the blindness was manageable. Her sons and grandchildren abroad, she lived alone with the help of a maid, but knew how to navigate the rooms, knew the location of every object, knew how to fill the shot glasses with tequila perfectly. It was the outside world, which she'd yearned so long to join, that was transformed by this cruel trick of fate from a prize finally in hand to a challenge that was too forbidding, now forever out of reach.

By 1994, a friend reported to me, callers to the house were instructed to be told that "Señora Buñuel doesn't live here any more." She herself was mystified about my admission: "I don't know why I allowed you to come. I tell the girl to tell them all I'm not here." We drank tequila and talked about her health (worse), her sight (worse), her sons and grandchildren (wonderful). She explained again her reluctance to venture outside

the house and cursed the blindness that had so afflicted her last years. She tired quickly and thanked me for coming.

Three months later, on 4 November, she died, at the age of 86. I was told that only a small obituary marked her passing in Mexico. A friend searching news files in Spain could find no record at all of her death. The indifference is abhorrent: I believe that Jeanne Rucar de Buñuel deserves an honoured place in film history, especially in contemporary terms, and I regret that more people didn't get to know this luminous woman of great generosity and hospitality, of such true originality and deeply artistic temperament, devoid of rancour.

Memories of a Woman Without a Piano perfectly expresses, in title and content, the paradoxical life of this woman: a woman who lacked a piano but not a memory, whose spirit resisted amnesia even as it acquiesced to its own plunder, who spent her life as the butt of her husband's jokes and the focus of his sadism, yet never failed to capture his attention. If Jeanne's life failed to measure up precisely to our standards for passive resistance, she nevertheless managed to lead a rich life with her beloved Luis by hiding within herself the fantasies he could not abide.

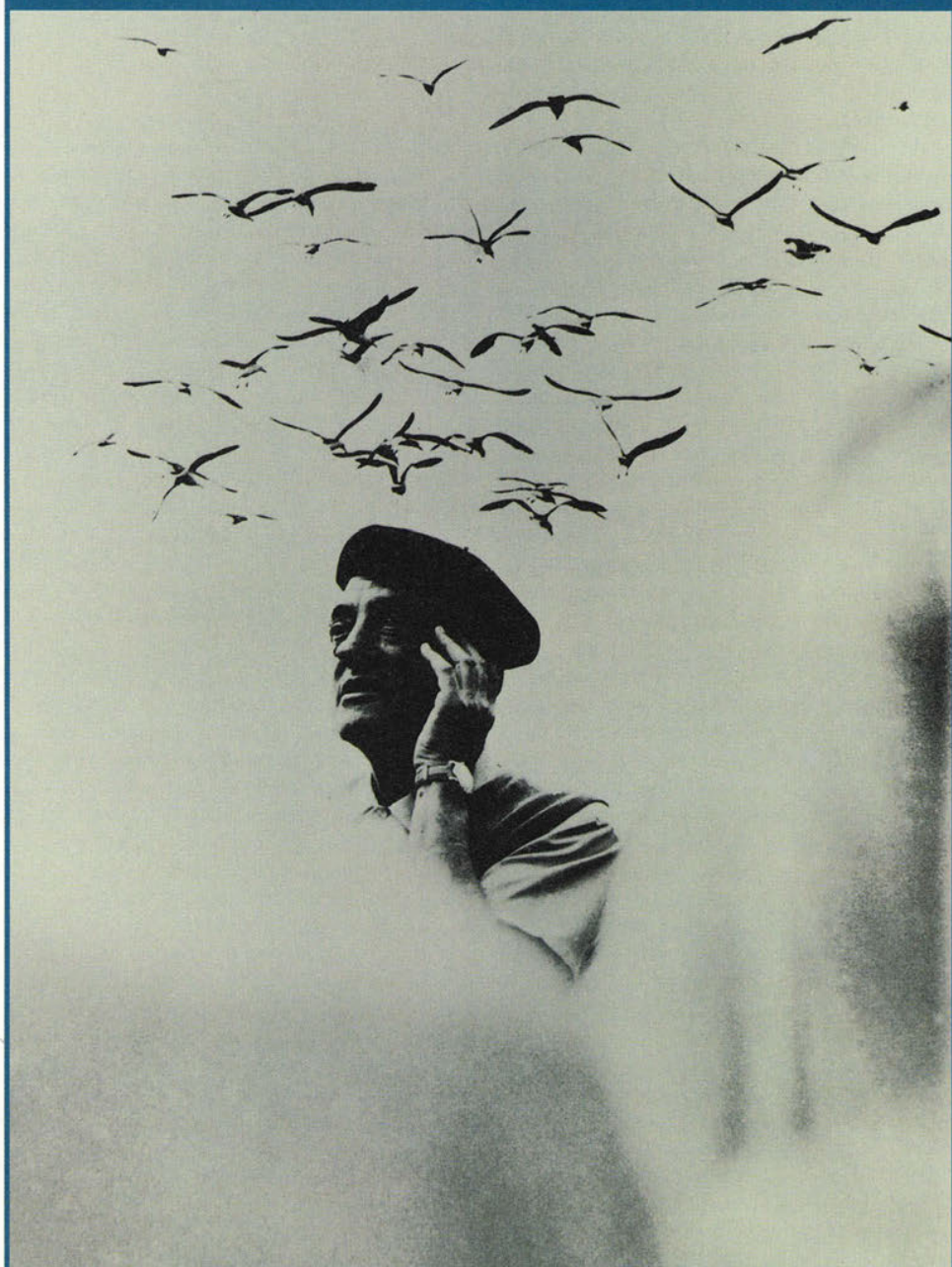
We can be glad, in the end, that she left behind so many telltale traces of the being that accompanied him unnoticed: the naughty toys, the borrowed bar, the framed needlepoint. There's the cinematic bequest for which I've urged she be recognised: a world of mysterious and entrancing and ultimately inexplicable women who inhabit the films directed by her husband, formed by his view of her. Above all, though, there's her book, the incontrovertible testimony of words she finally had the nerve to speak and the desire to have published – words that spell out so clearly the evidence necessary to convict one whom she never wished to accuse.

Thanks to Marisol Martín del Campo and Lourdes Portillo for assisting me with the 1991 interview and to Ximena Cuevas for background help with the 1994 interview. Any publisher interested in bringing out an English language translation of *Memories of a Woman Without a Piano* should contact its US translator Jenny Apostol, care of this magazine.

● Buñuel is everywhere and nowhere. The surrealist techniques he pioneered (of incongruous juxtaposition and disrupted causality, of oneiric fantasy and autonomous imagery) have become the *lingua franca* of advertising and video clips, yet the master himself is conspicuously absent. David Thomson recently reminded us that no film by Buñuel has ever been included in the top ten lists compiled by *Sight and Sound* for the past five decades; and the sparse audience on the nights I attended this year's retrospective at the Barbican would suggest popular approval is also less than overwhelming. Why is it that Buñuel has fallen so far out of critical fashion? And how might we rescue him from the neglect (and the deceptive overfamiliarity) which now cloaks his extraordinary body of work? I will argue that the answer to the first question has to do with gender; the second, nationality. And moreover that we can map these two hot topics of cinematic debate on to two periods of Buñuel's career: the glossy French films, so reassuring in their familiarity, and the less well funded Mexican movies, less aesthetically pleasing and perhaps more disturbing to English-language audiences still relatively unfamiliar with them. If Buñuel's unapologetic misogyny is now hard to swallow, his discreet critique of the nation state has much to teach us today.

There can be no doubt that we have witnessed a certain banalisation of surrealist technique. Once incendiary, the images of *Un chien andalou* (the slashed eye, the ants emerging from a hole in the hand) have become sacred icons of film history. The chaotic enumerations of *L'Age d'or*'s dialogue ("accordions, hippopotami, paintbrushes") now just seem quaint. What's more, such images – which attempt to transcend the merely random and may once have posed a social challenge to the bourgeois order – have been effectively neutralised, not only by their commercial exploitation, but also by our knowledge of Buñuel's obsessive repetition of them throughout a lengthy career. *L'Age d'or*'s cow in the bed of a wealthy lady or its workers' cart traversing an elegant soirée can no longer be read by the modern viewer as a

SHOCKS AND PREJUDICES



More than Pythonesque? Buñuel's *The Phantom of Liberty*, left; Buñuel, film-maker, right

Now that advertisements seem the heirs of surrealism and the revolutionary claims of the movement seem empty, of what value and interest is the cinema of the Spanish surrealist Luis Buñuel? By Paul Julian Smith

political intervention: we now know that a revolution in poetic language will not effect change in the real. Indeed Buñuel's constant return to the motif of the beast and the bourgeois is the purest proof of the impotence of the surrealist attempt to extend psychic disruption into the social sphere (further proof: such travesties as MTV's colorized version of *Un chien andalou*).

The first anecdote in Buñuel's often unrevealing autobiography concerns the director's mother. Suffering from amnesia in old age, she could no longer recognise her son as he repeatedly entered her room in order to receive her smiling but uncomprehending welcome. The overt message of the story is the fragility of memory and the desperate struggle to hold on to a sense of self. But what the story unwittingly displays is not only Buñuel's repetition-compulsion (his pleasure in endlessly repeating the same scenario); but also his casual cruelty (the mystifying of an elderly woman). And misogyny would seem to be one of Buñuel's persistent characteristics: his films are a cavalcade of sexual violence against women, from the grabbing of breasts and buttocks in *Un chien andalou* to the implied sewing up of the vagina by the paranoid patriarch in *El* (1953). It is typical of Buñuel that he should use a drunken woman in *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* to ridicule feminism, as just another ideology like fascism or Catholicism, the mere gesticulation of empty signs. And if Buñuel (in a typically Spanish gesture) rejects all '-isms' without pausing to reflect on their differing effects in the world or the concrete inequalities by which some are motivated, he also seems caught up in that gendering of the cinematic apparatus which feminist scholars of the 70s anatomised and made familiar. Thus the main image chosen by the Barbican Cinema to publicise their season was from *Viridiana* (1961): a grizzled Fernando Rey bends over the ice-blond Silvia Pinal, whom he has drugged, dressed in his dead wife's bridal gown, and carried comatose to bed. There could be no clearer image of the frozen, fetishised woman as passive object of the man's look and no franker acknowledgment of the link between male voyeurism and sexual aggression. Such sequences continue to pose real problems for audiences unable or unwilling to identify with such a look, who (unlike the unconscious *Viridiana*) cannot close their eyes to the normalised perversions of narrative cinema.

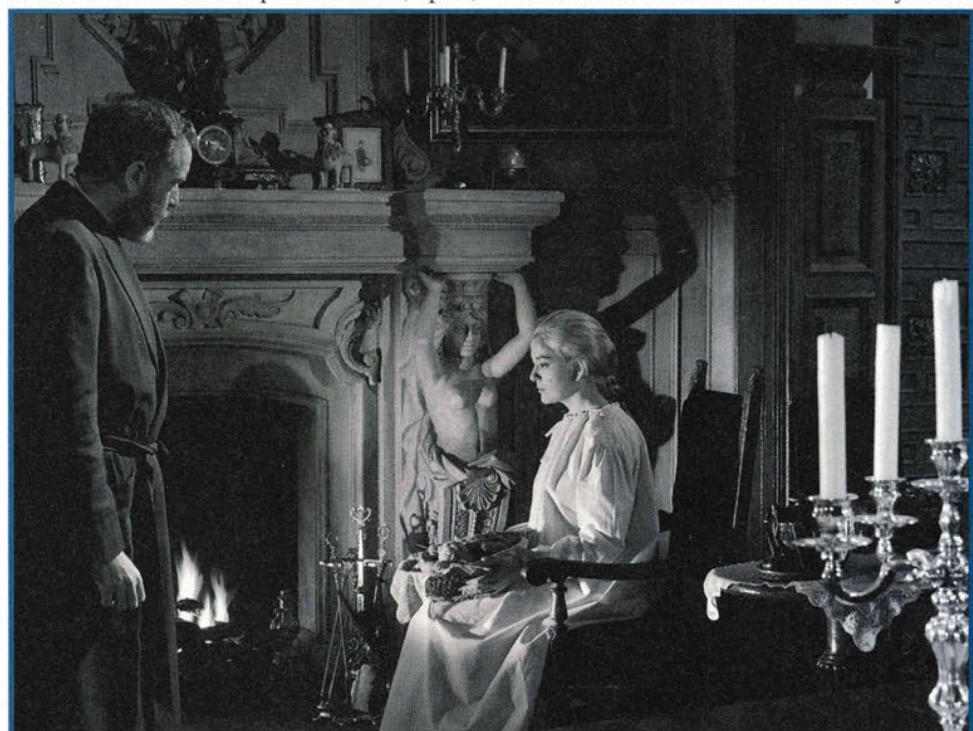
It comes as no surprise, then, that Buñuel should claim in his autobiography to be rigorously orthodox in his own sex life. The settled routine of the bourgeois, international lifestyle that he describes goes hand in hand with a claim that his interest in what he calls "perversions" is only "theoretical" and never implies a personal investment on his part; indeed an invitation from an unnamed Soviet director to partake in an orgy serves only to bring Buñuel's puritanism and homophobia to the surface. The Buñuel who welcomes the loss of libido in old age as liberation from a "tyrant" is also the Buñuel who believes that only repression can produce intense passion, and that the brutal discipline of a Catholic education is the true forcing house for deviant desires. The problem is quite simply that the outlaw desires the law: just as Buñuel endlessly attacks the bourgeoisie whom he clearly finds fascinating, so he tirelessly attacks the Christianity whose dead

hand renders transgression so necessary and so pleasurable. The cold, sexy novice *Viridiana* is valued not for herself but for her persistent but unknowing resistance to the male order: it is through her scorn for his love that the fastidious Fernando Rey comes to experience the full, destructive power of his own desire.

Like Robinson Crusoe, the object of one of Buñuel's most idiosyncratic literary adaptations, Buñuel has been washed up by the tide of cinematic history and gender revisionism. But he has also been betrayed by that complex of cultural changes which goes under the label post-modernism. Just as we now know that avant-garde artistic experiment will not transform everyday life, so we are properly sceptical of those who propose aesthetic or political revolution as a definitive break with the past. In France, Spain,

describes French cinema as sporting "beautiful sexy starlets" and "beautiful scenery"; its Latin American list leads with gay or female directors: Jaime Hermosillo, María Navarro. Buñuel's contempt for such tendencies is transparent: surely no director was as indifferent to camp, nor so unequivocally male; and he is equally dismissive of purely aesthetic pleasure or showy cinematic technique. One anecdote has cinematographer Gabriel Figueroa setting up a stunning shot of a Mexican volcano framed by fleecy clouds; Buñuel had him spin the camera round to a scrubby hillock topped by goats.

If Buñuel's hostility to visual pleasure makes him seem alien and distant to viewers accustomed to a showy French- or Spanish-language "cinema of the look", then his once-revolutionary narrative structures have rendered him all too easily assim-



Baroque dreams: Fernando Rey and Silvia Pinal in Buñuel's 'Viridiana'

and Mexico (the varied locations of Buñuel's cinematic career) contemporary film-makers seek not to transcend tradition but rather to work through it to new visions and new subjectivities. Recent films as varied as *La Reine Margot*, *Kika* and *Cronos* stage this attempt to remake cultural and national histories in a new and often ironic register. Moreover more flexible modes of distribution and exhibition, characteristic of the post-modern proliferation of technologies, have also tended to marginalise Buñuel. Where once elite audiences congregated in specialised theatres to pay tribute to the latest works of European auteurs, now foreign films are consumed in the very different domestic context of video. The art house has become the fun house. In their latest catalogue (which includes Almodóvar and Bigas Luna, but not Buñuel) hip UK distributors Metro Tartan reject the label of "art film" and the supposed "pretensions" of its audience, promising viewers a "myth explosion experience" of "sex, drugs, and serial killers". This shift from the secularised cult of "foreign film" to the unabashed visual pleasure of "world video" corresponds to changing tastes in cinematic form and the emergence of more fragmented audiences. Thus Metro Tartan's catalogue

able. Thoroughly domesticated in his later French period, Buñuel was canonised as the Hitchcock of Surrealism; and the episodic formats of such films as *The Phantom of Liberty* (1974) were praised as "shaggy dog stories" by such critics as Pauline Kael. *Phantom* is currently marketed by video distributors Electric with the label "Pythonesque". Just as Buñuel the blasphemer was dependent on the opposition of the Church to certify his transgression (with the Vatican famously causing *Viridiana* to be banned in Spain for some 15 years) so Buñuel the deconstructor of linear narrative was dependent on the continuing dominance of traditional forms to reinforce the disruptive violence of his wilfully inconsequential plots. When his techniques were appropriated by mainstream TV comedy, the master's challenge was inevitably muted. Such scenes in his films as the "dirty postcards", which are pictures of tourist sites, and the party at which guests eat in private and shit in public, are based on a simple rhetoric of reversal, as are the Dead Parrot and the Ministry of Silly Walks with which they were contemporary.

An irony emerges: if the surrealist experiment was intended to shock audiences into new ways of seeing, Buñuel himself remained obstinately ►



Men and masochism: 'Simon of the Desert'

◀ blind to his own prejudices, viewing female desire and sexual perversion as "scientific" matters in which he himself and his alter egos were not implicated. It is thus impossible to imagine the Fernando Rey character of the later films (worldly, sophisticated, obsessive) replaced by a woman or a gay man, so fully is the normative structure of heterosexual masculinity stitched into the fabric of the narrative. How, then, can we rescue Buñuel from these norms and retrieve some measure of transgressive pleasure and power from his vision?

I would start, perversely perhaps, with his visual austerity, the "nothing to see" of his technique. Dazzled by the gaudy kaleidoscope of much current cinema and deafened by its egregious recourse to music (see Tarantino) we may turn with relief to Buñuel's simplicity and silence. He was famously indifferent to both visuals and soundtrack. The Mexican films are elegantly economical, however bizarre their ostensible theme. *Simon of the Desert* (1965) has the scrubby Mexican *meseta* (photographed by Figueroa) standing in for Syria in the fourth century AD. And its uncompromising theme of mystical ecstasy and sensual temptation is echoed by the classical shooting style: crowded group shots at ground level give way to slow tilts up the column to the eponymous ascetic, brooding alone on his platform. On the soundtrack there are only occasional bursts of the *saetas* (popular devotional songs) and the rhythmic drumming of Buñuel's native Aragón.

And if *Simon* reproduces once more, with parodic overemphasis, the prestige of the male look, lord of all surveyed, then it also stresses the fragility and instability of that look. The bearded patriarch is tortured by visions of Silvia Pinal's devil: as lewd schoolgirl, exposing black garters on white thighs; as Good Shepherd, clutching a lamb; and finally as semi-naked and immaculately preserved corpse, arriving in a self-propelled coffin. Just as the elegant French *bourgeoises* played by Stéphane Audran and Delphine Seyrig run rings round their bemused, male lovers, and just as the servant Jeanne Moreau remains effortlessly detached from her vulgar employers (*Diary of a Chambermaid*, 1964), so here Silvia Pinal leaves no doubt as to who is in charge: in the final sequence (set in a New York nightclub to which the devil has miraculously transported Simon) Pinal gives herself up orgiastically to a dance known as "The Radioactive Flesh". Meanwhile the saint broods morosely in the corner.

In his love of strong and witty women, Buñuel opens the way to a reverse reading of his films which need not be dominated by the overt content of their narrative. For in some ways Buñuel coincides, ironically and suggestively, with more

recent feminist revisions of gendered modes of looking. Thus for every frigid Viridiana there is a fiery female devil, strutting her stuff to a beat group. Indeed the fact that both are played by the same actress, the knowing and self-assured Pinal, ensures that each role is read against the other and becomes impossible to pigeonhole. And if identity is slippery, so is gender positioning: in such narratives of male impotence as *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977), Buñuel repeatedly stresses male masochism and passivity, and their correlatives female sadism and activity. Indeed it could be argued that Fernando Rey's characters (narcissistic and solipsistic, fastidiously coiffed and doused in cologne) occupy 'feminine' positions in the narrative, since they do not initiate action but merely respond to it: when refused by Viridiana, Rey's only reply is suicide.

There is thus a space opened up for cross-gender identification, with characters occupying positions in the narrative that do not correspond to their sex. It is no accident that Linda Williams, a critic who made her name with an anti-censorship analysis of hardcore pornography, should have begun her career with a psychoanalytic study of the surrealist cinema of Buñuel: the sense of fluidity and fantasy, of the reciprocal relation between power and pleasure, are found in both of her books and both of her chosen topics. In Williams' reading of hardcore, as in her less explicitly feminist account of Buñuel, a possibility of women's pleasure is found in a most unpromising site, where no one had previously thought to look.

But Williams' blind spot is nationality. Jumping 40 years from *L'Age d'or* to *The Phantom of Liberty*, she passes over the 20 Mexican films in a paragraph; and her neglect of Buñuel's Spanish context is equalled only by the closeness of her attention to the French films and their psychoanalytic background. There is no doubt, however, that the question of nationality is crucial to the Buñuel who lived this very public life as an exile, and who was known in France as a Spanish director and in Spain as an Aragónese. Moreover, it is in his attitude to nationality, nomadic and shifting, that Buñuel draws closer to the post-modern problematic from which he is elsewhere so distant. For example, *Viridiana's* depiction of Spanish nationality is complex and contradictory. Shot under the nose of the dictatorship it nonetheless contains transparent attacks on the Franco regime, as when Francisco Rabal's young landowner complains of the "20 years of neglect" which his estate has suffered. On the other hand, the cruelty and stupidity of the paupers who betray Viridiana's Christian charity (and who stage a famous parody of the Last Supper) serve only to prove an article of faith which the Regime used to justify its continued dominance: that the Spanish people are too undisciplined to be trusted and require the firm hand of dictatorship to keep them in order. The estate thus is and is not Franco's Spain; or rather, it offers two irreconcilable images of that Spain which refuse any simple placing or localisation.

What of Mexico? Michael Wood has argued that there is "very little" of Mexico in Buñuel's Mexican films. Certainly, as we have seen, Buñuel is implacably opposed to that lyrical nationalism which is read abroad as exotic fatalism and is exemplified by Figueroa's luminous cinematography for indigenous Mexican directors. Buñuel

tells us that he first arrived in Mexico on the Day of the Dead; but in his films such touristic clichés are almost entirely absent: it was not Buñuel but Eisenstein who posed for photographers dressed as a Zapatista rebel. Shunning stereotype, Buñuel's Mexico is frequently faceless and impersonal. The moneyed Mexican townhouse of *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), to which an elegant group of partygoers is inexplicably confined, is interchangeable with the exquisite French chalets of *The Discreet Charm*, in which a similar group's expectations of dinner are endlessly frustrated. And yet, as Michael Wood reminds us again, *The Exterminating Angel* was shot in Mexico with a Mexican crew and actors, including Figueroa and Pinal once more.

Nationality is thus bracketed or suspended by Buñuel. It is at once wholly explicit, saturating the texture of the film, and disavowed, displaced into the unspecified zone of post-modern nomadism. If, as Jean-François Lyotard has argued, the post-modern is characterised by a transnational overflowing of boundaries, Buñuel's curious displacements of location simultaneously reproduce this and suggest, on the bodies of his actors and on their irreducibly specific gestures and accents, a certain critical regionalism.

So Buñuel fails to carry through the relation between the psychic and the social: the sheep and bear traipsing through the townhouse of *The Exterminating Angel* may stand in for the irruption of the unconscious, but they hardly serve to clarify the causes of Mexican class conflict. However, when recently a plunging peso brought middleclass Mexican ladies out on to the street protesting at price rises in luxury goods, the ghost of Buñuel seemed to hover, still, over Mexico City. And these doughty *bourgeoises* are spiritual heirs to the ones played by Silvia Pinal: icy valkyries who ride roughshod over the men who foolishly fund their pleasures. Thus if I favour the Spanish-language films over the French it is because the Spanish, in their austerity and abstraction, tend to elude that banalisation of surrealist technique effected by the high-gloss finish of the French. And if I argue for a new reading of Buñuel which neglects surface sexism for the less tangible processes of cross-gender fantasy and identification, it is because this reading, pioneered by anti-censorship feminists, is already made possible by the films themselves, if only we look more carefully for it. The times are hardly propitious for a revolution in cinematic language. But for all his puritanism and moralism, for all his fascination with the bourgeoisie he affected to despise, Buñuel remains an indispensable guide to the compulsive repetitions of neurosis and the insatiability of desire. Perhaps his mother was right to smile, after all.



Women and desire: 'L'Age d'or'

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Fight, fight, fight! That's all you can think of, Dick

Plantagenet – Virginia Mayo to George Sanders, *King Richard and the Crusaders* (1954)

I coulda had class. I coulda been a contender – Marlon Brando, *On the Waterfront* (1954)

Yer bewdiful in yer wrath – John Wayne as Temujin to Susan Hayward, *The Conqueror* (1955)

We'll make him an offer he can't refuse – Marlon Brando, *The Godfather* (1972)

Nothing else in the world smells like that... I love the smell of napalm in the morning – Robert Duvall, *Apocalypse Now* (1979)

Fasten your seat belts. It's going to be a bumpy night – Bette Davis, *All About Eve* (1950)

You don't have to say anything, and you don't have to do anything. Not a thing. Maybe just whistle. You know how to whistle don't you Steve? You just put your lips together and blow – Lauren Bacall to Humphrey Bogart, *To Have and Have Not* (1944)

Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn – Clark Gable, *Gone With the Wind* (1939)

After all, tomorrow is another day – Vivien Leigh (*ibid*)

Oh no, it wasn't the aviators, it was beauty that killed the beast – Robert Armstrong, *King Kong* (1933)

Yes angel, I'm going to send you over. The chances are you'll get off with life. That means if you're a good girl, you'll be out in 20 years. I'll be waiting for you. If they hang you, I'll always remember you – Humphrey Bogart to Mary Astor, *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)

Play it Sam. Play 'As Times Go By' – Ingrid Bergman, *Casablanca* (1942)

We didn't need dialogue, we had faces then – Gloria Swanson, *Sunset Boulevard*. (1950)

But we do need dialogue now, and good, bad or simply terrible, the above phrases are some of the stars of the screenwriters' world, which everyone will recognise – not that they will recognise the name of the screenwriter who wrote them. It was Ben Hecht who remarked that it was easier to become famous riding a bicycle than it was writing a screenplay.

He was of course quite right. The average member of the movie-going public would have difficulty recalling the screenwriters of even such huge classics as *Casablanca*, *All About Eve*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Gone With The Wind* or *Citizen Kane* (as did even its director Orson Welles, until the *New Yorker* critic Pauline Kael brought him to acknowledge the contribution of Herman J. Mankiewicz!), let alone lesser works.

And ignorance is not the sole preserve of the man in the street. The vaunted film critic Alexander Walker, in a criticism of *Frenzy*, once ascribed to Alfred Hitchcock a sequence that "only he could have invented", quite forgetting that the screenwriter doesn't only write the dialogue but also the action in a scene, as was the case here. I wrote the famous "Farewell to Babs" tracking shot down the stairs and out into Covent Garden in the first draft, before Hitch even read it. In fact, at that stage he wanted us to see a second strangling! Of course it is only fair to say, lest this statement seem too peevish and self-aggrandising, that this script was plainly written under the aegis of the Master. When one writes for a genuine auteur, one obviously tries one's best to accommodate his genius.

Lack of recognition also occurs because the screenwriter does not get the same publicity as the stars and the Director. He is, to be sure, something of a pariah, detested on the whole by directors as a nuisance on the set for being the only person there

who makes them uneasy, since a writer inevitably knows more of the film's structure than directors themselves do, since he invented it. And directors also fear the word as much as they do writers, endlessly and unreflectively maintaining that only the image is important.

This dislike is mostly carefully hidden: when Oscar time rolls round it finds only hypocritical expression, in ritual obeisance to the writer of the "without whom none of this could ever have taken place" variety.

But none of this invalidates the many extraordinarily satisfactory rewards in screenwriting, and by no means all of them are financial. To break down a chaotic or dispersed book into a workable, dramatic film scenario, by imposing on it the all important structure and form, is enormously satisfying, as is the witnessing of it coming to life and working so well that the famed "willing suspension of disbelief" is both instantaneous and continuous.

It always seemed to me that it should be the most stimulating and challenging of all writing forms, not only because the creative aspects demand the technical skills of a diarist, essayist, journalist, novelist and playwright combined, but because of the research involved. Today my mind is a ragbag of random facts on a great number of hugely disparate subjects, from sacrificial ceremonies in Celtic mythology to the training drills of the Roman Army; from Egyptian hieroglyphics to the rites of the Catholic Church and to the sex life of the Adelie penguin.

Which last was the subject of my very first screenplay, *Mr Forbush and the Penguins*. This was a fairly chaotic movie which had the young John Hurt capering about the Atlantic slinging rocks at Skuas with a Roman ballista, in a vain and misconceived attempt to protect the penguins' eggs from their depredations. I'm not sure that it all added up, though my younger daughter assures me to this day it's her favourite film of mine. And it was not without its joyous nonsenses: the female lead was replaced after the first rough assembly, and it was the only film I know of in which a stage direction was delivered as spoken dialogue! It didn't matter. No one noticed – which should tell you something about the respect generally accorded to the screen writer's craft!

Frenzy followed, a screenplay I adapted from a book called *Goodbye Piccadilly Farewell Leicester Square*, for Alfred Hitchcock. It was a story in the classic Hitchcock tradition – man suspected of murder runs, and by doing so thus further incriminates himself, until the audience is let off the hook in the last frame. (Truffaut in his book on Hitchcock points out he made this same story 50 times!) At first I nearly talked myself out of writing the film by accusing the great man of being illogical, and of leaving holes in his plots between the famous set pieces. (One such had to do with how the villains knew Cary Grant was getting on a particular train in *North by Northwest*.) This was before lunch on the first day of our work together, and the meal itself was taken in arctic silence, Hitch thinking furiously throughout. At the end of it he said in his stertorous way, "Dear boy, quite obviously you've never heard of the ice box syndrome." This I admitted, and he expounded as follows.

"I leave holes in my films deliberately, so that the following scenario can take place in countless homes. The man of the house gets out of bed in the

THE WICKER MAN AND OTHERS

middle of the night, and goes down stairs and takes a chicken leg out of the ice box. His wife follows him down and asks what he's doing. 'You know', he says, 'there's a hole in that film we saw tonight.' 'No there isn't', she says, and they fall to arguing. As a result of which they go to see it again.

"Just how many holes do you want leaving in *Frenzy*?" I asked him disbelievingly.

"I'm quite sure you won't leave any, dear boy," he replied slyly. "Just leave that to me." And so reconciliation was effected.

After *Frenzy* (which I'm glad to say went a long way to restoring Hitch's reputation after the disappointing reception of his three previous films: *Marnie*, *Torn Curtain* and *Topaz*) I went on to adapt my stage play *Sleuth* for the screen.

The distinguished director Joseph L. Mankiewicz agreed to direct, and we had a merry, brittle battle hammering out the screenplay, mostly at his home in Pound Ridge, Connecticut. Joe had been severely affected by his experiences making *Cleopatra*, a crisis-ridden two year epic with the feuding and illness-dogged Burtons, from which he could not escape. In memory of it his favourite cartoon hung above the place where he worked. It showed two helplessly isolated prisoners fettered halfway up a dungeon wall, with hundreds of yards of smooth, unscaleable stone on either side of them, presenting absolutely no chance of escape. One of them is saying to the other, "Now this is my plan..."

This was his state of mind, and it was further exacerbated by an unfortunate remark of mine, when in response to his declared favourite game of bilingual puns, I suggested that "Manque Wits" might be a good example!

However we persevered, and in due course, with the formidable help of the James Bond set-designer Ken Adams, and Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine, we produced a highly successful movie of great stylishness and polish, which reaped a reward of four Oscar nominations. At the time I made the somewhat incautious (for future audiences)

Anthony Shaffer on screen-writing and working with directors, including Hitchcock



remark to the *New York Times* that I must be the only writer in the history of the cinema ever to have the entire cast of a film nominated for an Oscar. But perhaps that *bon mot* was eclipsed by my suggestion to Roger Moore, the MC at the actual Oscar ceremonies, who was at a loss to know what to do with the statuette when the winner for best actor, Marlon Brando in *The Godfather*, refused it, and sent an Indian girl to plead the Indian cause in his place, that they "should have made him an Oscar he couldn't refuse". Perhaps this in microcosm emphasises the sovereignty of the screenwriter.

Now it was time for me to tackle Agatha Christie. The series was offered to me by the redoubtable team of John Brabourne and Richard Goodwin, after some help I had offered to Sydney Lumet on the script of *Murder on the Orient Express*. I wrote the two films *Death on the Nile* and *Evil Under the Sun*, with Peter Ustinov as Hercule Poirot in place of Albert Finney. The policy initiated in *Orient Express* of filling the cast list with stars was continued in these two films, and they both found favour with the critics for their charm and general *esprit*.

As a script-writing exercise they were interesting principally for their *dénouements*, which, it seemed to me, were endless. I even asked John Brabourne whether a 45-minute *dénouement* did not seem to him excessive, but he insisted that that was what the Christie addicts demanded. The problem is that there are so many sly clues, particularly in the latter (a bath that no one will admit taking, a bottle of used sun-tan lotion no one will admit throwing in the sea, a pipe its owner won't light, the similarity of sun bathers, a literal translation from Latin, and many more) that they all have to be given their due, for in their seeming incommensurable accumulation lies the genius of Christie.

And Poirot himself is very much a slow starter: that's why it's all left to the end. He wouldn't be my first choice of a detective. Usually, by the time the leetle grey cells grind into action, most of his clients have snuffed it!

Shooting on both films was fascinating with so many stars in contention, ranging from the abrasiveness of Bette Davis, who kept insisting on more lines for herself while poor old Poirot was doing his best to explain it all, to the charm of David Niven who rose above his young daughter's car-smash to give his usual urbane performance, to Peter Ustinov whose professionalism and *sang froid*, in the long last wrap-up, have I'm sure never been more highly taxed.

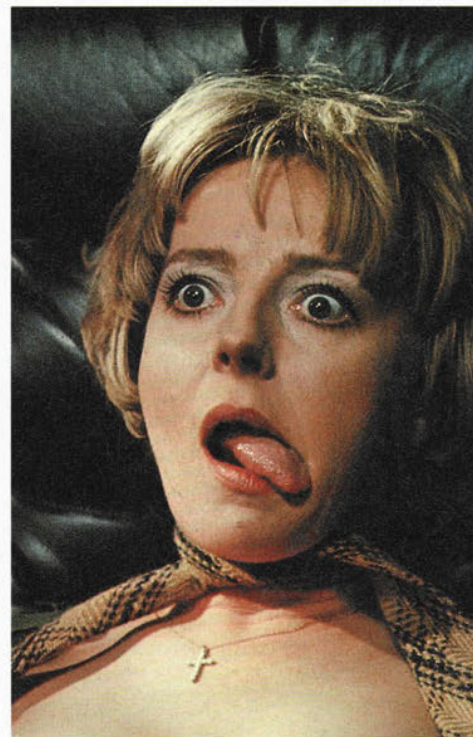
Later I shared my first screen credit on another Christie film, *Appointment with Death*: I did not work with the director Michael Winner nor the other writers, so I shall make no comment on the resultant imbroglia.

On the whole I have been lucky in that a high proportion of my screenplays has been original work, rather than adaptations from other's material. *Sleuth* was the first, to be followed later by *The Wicker Man* and *Absolution*.

The Wicker Man was written for a consortium of Peter Snell, the then-managing director of British Lion, Christopher Lee, who needed a break from rushing around the Gothic corridors of Hammer films sporting elongated dentures with his eyes full of cochineal, and my then-partner in an Advertising Film Company, Robin Hardy, who eventually directed the film.

It was an attempt to write a high-class horror movie – in essence a reasonably uncompromising essay on the nature of human sacrifice. It succeeded perhaps too well, deeply shocking Snell's successors at British Lion, who, terrified by the art house label attached to it when it won the *Grande Prix* for *Films Fantastique* in Paris – "The *Citizen Kane* of the horror genre" – did their level best to bury it. It was finally grudgingly released with Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now*. But it didn't really take off until the kids picked it up at UCLA in the States.

From then on it not only persisted in winning film festivals, which of course damned it in the eyes of its parent company, but finally grew into a fully



British gothic: 'The Wicker Man', left; 'Frenzy', right

fledged cult movie. Re-released this month on video in a shamefully abbreviated version it will, I hope, find renewed favour – even if it fails to enrich the author, who owing to the largely criminal duplicity of the movie industry has after some 20 years so far not received a penny piece in royalties.

Absolution, starring Richard Burton, which was the last of my produced *oeuvres*, apart from a storyline credit for *Sommersby* (which is itself a new form of screenwriter credit) and contributions to a number of films which frankly I disown, produced one fascinating lesson. This was that not all concealment-of-identity thrillers should keep the audience in ignorance until the very end of the story. This film concerns a malicious, crippled Catholic schoolboy who uses the device of the confessional to torture a priest, by pretending to be another boy. I realised (too late for the director Anthony Page) that the audience should be allowed to know the truth during the last two or three reels of the picture, thus permitting them to share the priest's agony and truly to appreciate the depths of the wickedness taking place, instead of having it gabbled off as a knockout surprise in the last five minutes.

Today, after a recent spell as Head of Script Development at Ealing Studios, and having recently eschewed the Hollywood film-makers on the rather pompous grounds that by and large they are debauching the psyche of the world, I am writing a somewhat black, Goyaesque film for the Spaniards called *The Nine Doors to the Kingdom of Shadows* based on a book, *The Dumas Club*, by Arturo Perez Reverte. I'm also about to start a film set in Australia, where I mostly live, entitled *Tell Me Lies* from the novel *Talk To Me Tenderly, Tell Me Lies* by John Gordon Davis.

And so we go on. Is fame the spur? I doubt it. Perhaps I should take Ben Hecht's advice and forget about screenwriting. After all, riding a bicycle is something you never forget.

LOOKS

Our new quarterly review of recently published books. Short reviews by Ian Christie, Leslie Felperin, and Nick Roddick



Self-portrait: Katharine Hepburn, author of *'Me'*, right, and Hepburn with Cary Grant in *'Bringing up Baby'*, above

David Thomson tells all about the business of film biographies Getting a life

Katharine Hepburn

by Barbara Leaming, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 549pp, £20 (hb), ISBN 0 297 81319 6

Suppose that writing is your work, and film your expertise. Let us also imagine that you want to stay alive and do your best to sustain the health, happiness and Power Ranger collection of the few people known as your dependants. You may do some journalism, some critical writing, some teaching; you may help subtitle pictures; you may even have a shady corner in the publicity field. Still, if you can contrive it, somehow there is nothing like getting a life. No, I don't mean abandoning the dark and its dreams and taking orphans on long country walks. I am referring to the agreement that may be made with a publisher – preferably publishers on both sides of the Atlantic – whereby you are contracted to write the biography of some luminous figure from the movies.

How do publishers measure this luminosity? Well, suppose that over the decades you have explored the movies of, say, Carl Dreyer, Ann Dvorak and Arthur Braithwaite, and reached remarkable and eloquent depths of insight. To propose 200,000 word books on any of those three, even with “astonishing new material”, is unlikely to move publishers. In fact, the moguls of the book business are much like their counterparts in Hollywood – they favour name recognition and subjects that have worked before. So you may have to shift from Dreyer and Braithwaite and take your selection from Elizabeth Taylor, Frank Sinatra or Marlon Brando. The last year has seen two more Taylor books (by Donald Spoto and C. David Heymann), a Brando autobiography and a biography by Peter Manso. All are depressing: the lives of actors lack the rapture of their work.

What I mean to say is this: the proper place for a dazzling evocation of the vexed stillness of *Gertrud*, the sub-textualised drama (that *noir* ballading) in Sinatra's singing, or the codification of the Taylor close-up is in these pages, or pages like them. But if you can link Mr Sinatra to known gangsters (especially those with a snappy line in tough talk), or indeed to Miss Taylor, you may swing a deal. It will come as no surprise to readers and publishers if candour and research compel you to reveal the lives of Taylor, Sinatra and Brando as chaotic, sordid and deluded. Indeed, readers will turn moody if you omit such things, or if you lack “terrific anecdotes”. Anecdotes are invaluable, for your publisher will extract and circulate them to magazine writers, talk show hosts and gossipers who will

“cover” your book. Do not be astonished if you have to extract these “nuggets” yourself in advance, for your publisher. Again, like movies, publishing is a rich, exciting business, leaving little time for reading.

Such thoughts ran through my head as I read *Katharine Hepburn*, by Barbara Leaming. Now I like Ms Hepburn on screen. Not always, perhaps; she has made plenty of films that even a friend would have to put down to her impulsiveness. She even got Oscars for some of them. I even find the fabled romance of Tracy and Hepburn rather less stimulating than her precarious alliance with Cary Grant in *Bringing Up Baby*, *Holiday* and *The Philadelphia Story*. When she was good, she was so good that you can see those films for ever, marvelling at her trembling mixture of vulnerability and assurance (long before illness, there was an artistic tremor).

But Hepburn is an oddity. In the 30s, when she did her great work, she was not truly popular. The pairing with Tracy was crucial in taming her for audiences. Garson Kanin's 1971 book, *Tracy and Hepburn* – a novelistic memoir, shall we say? – certainly helped make her accessible. She grew bolder with age and made several big, distinguished pictures where she was no longer put to the test of being ‘sexy’: *The African Queen*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *The Lion in Winter*. And she survived. She will be 89 next May, if she lives, and everyone wants her to. She has fought age, her illness, undue fuss and phoneys everywhere. She espouses honourable causes. She is a real heroine, and as sane and down-to-earth as most other eccentric New England ladies.

Now, this paragon did have one of the great successes of her life – and easily the most lucrative (old ladies have to look after themselves) – with a view of her life that flew like a jazzy kite in a high wind, called *Me: Stories of My Life*. *Me* is not quite as dry and self-effacing as New England is; it is more Madonna-ish. But why shouldn't stars do their own lives? *Me* by K. H. Hepburn is very much more saleable than *Katharine Hepburn* by... me. Somehow the gullible public take it for granted that autobiographies are testaments, closer to the truth than other writers might come (no matter that in Hollywood the “me” of interviews and fan magazines was often a voice written by strangers).

Me was authentic, and that's why it sold. Hepburn wrote it, and in a way that encouraged the reader's trust (or fondness). But the “life” was much shorter than the life. A great deal was omitted and much else glossed over with the author's vigorous nonsense attitude. Why not? We most of us have tricky old ladies in our real

families, and we more or less live with the way their version of history has smothered the facts. Come to think of it, this self-serving affects the younger women too, and the men. It is human and lifelike: better yet, it is the dangerous way Tracy Lord floats through life in *The Philadelphia Story*.

So *Me* left room for a good biography, and here – Weidenfeld and Nicolson proclaim – it is: “At last, the definitive biography of Katharine Hepburn... The story that she herself never told – the story that she herself never knew.” That does beg a few questions, even for a blurb. But blurbs ache for the new, the hitherto unrevealed, and nowadays apparently they're ready to spring surprises on their own subjects. For while it's easy and beguiling to imagine things that 88-year-olds have left unsaid, it's a stretch to get excited over stuff they never knew.

Of course, Leaming's book is subtler and better than the blurb leads you to expect. One of her guiding missions in this book is to get to the back of the Hepburn family mystery – to track down matters of disturbance, secrecy and even suicide that Hepburn herself may not have understood (which is not the same as not knowing). Few of us properly understand our parents, but we surely know the puzzles and the problems exist. Leaming makes a case for saying that Hepburn's rare persona, her odd mixture of directness and formality, grew out of a large, highly educated, very talkative family which only managed to leave the large, personal issues unuttered. She makes a good case and great read out of it. Indeed, for well over a hundred pages, we get a very thoroughly researched and felt psychological mystery about a New England family at the turn of the century.

That means that Katharine Houghton Hepburn is born, on 12 May 1907, on page 128. She makes her first movie, *A Bill of Divorcement*, in 1932, on page 272. Spencer Tracy is buried, in 1967, on page 495. And the narrative concludes on page 512.

Do you begin to see the question marks that attend “definitive”? There is a lopsidedness in so much back story before the life itself, and the work. On *Golden Pond* is summed up, Oscar included, in a four-line paragraph. Her prolonged and heartfelt attempt to do *Travels With My Aunt*, with George Cukor (one of the best projects she ever had) gets ten lines, most of which are devoted to the law suit that followed the script. *Love Affair*, her most recent work, where she is very touching, is not even mentioned. And, apart from one reference in the elusive section on sources, *Me* is not dealt with. A biographer may be forgiven for being suspicious about *Me*, but no one



doubts that Hepburn wrote it and decided on its omissions, its white lies, its serene egotism and its ebullient title. *Me* surely needs talking about in a biography, let alone a definitive work.

Do we want to know – and I mean the “we” who read *Sight and Sound* – about Katharine Hepburn as an actress, a screen personality and a star, or as a celebrity, a ‘legend in her own time’, to whom all rumours and possibilities may cling? Suppose that Katharine Hepburn had simply suffered her own muddled family history and had a difficult, unresolved love affair with a married drunk from Milwaukee (call him Spencer), who must have had his own lengthy, troubled back story. Would that woman have or deserve a biography – much less the dozen plus already dropped on Ms Hepburn? Doesn’t the interest in Hepburn depend upon the work and the moments in which that brave face seems to think and feel? Or is it hopelessly purist and humanly stupid to insist on separating that bright work from all the dark clouds of life that surrounded it?

I don’t know the answers, but I know I wanted more about *Bringing Up Baby* which, for me, is the best film Hepburn ever made, as well as a disconcerting portrait of a woman whose appeal, energy and sense of life do not conceal the chance that she is demented and dangerous. I wanted to know more about the art and the craft of that, even what that role meant to Hepburn in her own life. Barbara Leaming’s *Baby* gets three pages on its making, and there is a nice detail about veteran comic Walter Catlett telling Hepburn to play the role straight and let the audience laugh. I’ve always liked that story ever since I read it in Joseph McBride’s *Hawks on Hawks*. But I’ve never just believed it, because I’ve learned to trust very little about what Howard Hawks ever said. Trust the pictures (and wait for Todd McCarthy’s life of Hawks).

Leaming makes one other point about *Baby*: Cary Grant, she says, was doing John Ford – his glasses were Fordian, and Grant’s David reacted to Susan as Ford did with Hepburn. It is Leaming’s largest and determining contention that there was a deep love between John Ford and Katharine Hepburn. You can read the book to judge. I will only add that Ford and Hepburn family members have complained at what they see as Leaming’s inflation of a few letters. Ford’s grandson has called Leaming’s book “a Gothic novel that pretends to be a biography”.

So this “definitive” biography does wonders with its exploration of background and then turns increasingly sketchy but misguided in its interpretation. A full life of Hepburn remains to be done – though I suspect that anyone interested in trying it should wait for Selden West’s life of Tracy which should be ready in a couple of years. The man from Milwaukee has never yet been centre page, but his story could alter the ►

◀ way we see Hepburn.

Where does this leave movie lives? Maybe the most important conclusion is that people who aspire to be legendary and who play upon the fantasies of strangers are uncommonly hard to pin down in fact. Not many of them leave documentary memories – and old letters are so much more reliable than elderly memories. When I did David Selznick's life, I had as a subject a madman who kept every piece of paper. So I could visit the 80-year-olds left alive with an embarrassing advantage: I had what they said in 1934, or whenever. Yet sometimes when I met the old-timers – in Bel Air houses or New Jersey nursing homes – they were sitting with several books on their tables – the kind of legend-rattling clichés that I hoped to do away with. With an endearing sense of duty, my witnesses had been refreshing their memories for me. Then I had the delicate task of deciding whether to show them actual letters of which they now had no memory.

The legends go on getting printed. Decent history has hardly begun; and maybe it has no chance. The great film lives – like those written by Michael Powell and Elia Kazan – are personal, self-dramatising and sublimely above the facts. Michael Powell's two volumes have been called into question on matters of fact but I don't think Michael would have been surprised, or offended. He began to write his autobiography in 1980, when he came to teach at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire for a term. I was his colleague there and I supposed that he might be far from his own materials. So I offered my own library for what it was worth. "No," said Michael, "I'm not really going to check things. I'll write it as I remember it."

That method may leave a few survivors reeling and indignant, but it's true to the self-confident vision of the Powell-Pressburger films. Michael believed in emotion and imagination; he was scornful of "documentary" and he saw fact as being like weather – changeable. But Powell's autobiography is as good and valuable as his films. Equally, Kazan's book – which is more diligent factually, and chronically confessional – helps us understand the passion in his films.

Movie-makers need to rise above drab facts sometimes. Powell had to survive *Peeping Tom*; Kazan has endured decades of abuse because of his testimony to the House Un-American Activities Committee. There is every reason for film scholars to pursue the facts. In so many ways, society needs to have a clearer understanding of how the business works, and how much the money means. But be careful: that risks spoiling the romance; and we all want to think that movies are wondrous.

As the years go by, Hepburn's *Me* may outlive the army of Leamings. It is legend, and Ms Hepburn was smart and romantic enough to do her own stone tablets.

Biographies

Are They Really So Awful?:

A Cameraman's Chronicle

by Christopher Challis, Janus Publishing, 276pp, £14.95 (hb), ISBN 1 85756 193 7
Director of Photography Challis recounts his experiences lensing on some notable British films (including *Genevieve* and *The Tales of Hoffman*) and working with eminent film-makers and stars (Michael Powell, Elizabeth Taylor). Not one of the great prose-stylists, but Challis provides an entertaining behind-the-camera view.

Burt Lancaster: the Terrible-Tempered Charmer

by Michael Munn, Robson, 278pp, £17.95, ISBN 0 86051 970 8

Producing a surprisingly dull trawl through a fascinating actor's life, Munn dishes the sanitised dirt, especially about extramarital affairs (with Shelley Winters, among others) and covers the star's medical history comprehensively, but has little to say about the films to which Lancaster contributed his muscular and compelling presence. So thoroughly researched and quotation-saturated it seems more collated than written.

Garbo: A Biography

by Barry Paris, Macmillan, 650pp, £20 (hb), ISBN 0 283 99954 3

Though heaving with tiny, well-researched details, incorporating many unpublished documents (even

Garbo's drama-school lecture notes), this massive tome is a surprisingly quick and compulsive read about the enigmatic Swedish star who described her life story as one "about back entrances and side doors and secret elevators and other ways of getting in and out of places so that people don't bother you." Paris is obsessively meticulous about housebreaking into this fortress of discretion, leaving no secret undisclosed. Contains some lovely candid shots.

A Haunted Life: A Biography of Anthony Perkins

by Ronald Bergan, Little, Brown & Company, 404pp, £17.50 (hb), ISBN 0 316 90697 2

A passable canter through the life and films of a star whose career all but ground to a halt with the role in *Psycho* (for which he will always be remembered, even if it was made 30 years before his death). Bergan is better on the films than the man, where his observations rarely rise about the stock-in-trade of star biographies – and suggest, moreover, someone who was deeply pissed off rather than truly "haunted". It is however a thorough work, interestingly illustrated, with a good filmography.

Ken & Em: The Biography of Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson

by Ian Shuttleworth, Headline, 344pp, £6.99, ISBN 0 7472 4718 8

Shuttleworth so judiciously tempers bemused admiration for his subjects with critical detachment that one

finds oneself almost warming to the charmed British luvvie duo everyone loves to hate.

Michael Redgrave: My Father

by Corin Redgrave, Richard Cohen Books, 176pp, £17.99, ISBN 1 86066 000 2
Progeny's recollections of famous fathers are fast becoming so numerous they may need special bookshop space of their own. This one is more absorbing than most: Redgrave's highly personal portrait of his thespian father deals frankly with Michael's bisexuality, and is written in sorrow and joy, anger and affection, settling scores and opening old wounds.

Nightmare of Ecstasy:

The Life and Art of Edward D. Wood, Jr.

by Rudolph Grey, Faber and Faber, 231pp, £9.99, ISBN 0 571 17611 9

Reprinted to tie in with Burton's celebrated film of the life, *Ed Wood*, this collection of personal memories from Wood's friends and relatives – including wife Kathy and pal "Bunny" Breckinridge – will be as essential for Wood-be fans as an angora sweater. The recollections of his decline and death are especially poignant. Contains an excellent filmography.

Orson Welles: The Road to Xanadu

by Simon Callow, Jonathan Cape, 640pp, £20 (hb), ISBN 0 224 03852 4

The first half of a projected two volume biography, actor and director Callow covers the childhood, education and inexorable rise of



Lana: The Life and Loves of Lana Turner
by Jane Ellen Wayne, Robson Books, 198pp, £14.95 (hb), ISBN 0 86051 971 6

Sweater-girl Turner who died last month, shone brightest in *The Postman Always Rings*

Twice and *'Imitation of Life'*. Her other films were mainly dross, but her life was as wonderfully lurid as any film noir, spanning seven husbands and a mafioso lover, Johnny Stompanato, who was killed by her own daughter. Wayne goes to town with this pulpy

bio, and sums up her subject beautifully: "A few years ago a fire broke out in Lana's apartment building. Forced to evacuate, she grabbed three items: her cigarettes, her lipstick, and her hairdryer. That, my friends is a movie star of the golden Era."

Welles up to the release of *Citizen Kane*. Callow doesn't pull any big rabbits out of the biographer's hat, but this is a good, gossipy read, amusing and well-written, which emphasises Welles' key friendships with gay men and the impact of his theatrical adventures in Ireland before his life became a "sort of sustained falling apart".

River Phoenix: The Biography

by John Glatt, Piatkus, 283pp, £9.99, ISBN 0 7499 1511 0

A grungy smackhead and vegetarian pin-up, who was raised and probably sexually abused by the Children of God cult, lurching to fame, and then overdosed at the tender age of 23, Phoenix was perfect for victim-of-the-zeitgeist icon status, a Jimmy Dean for the 90s. The acting career, though reasonably well recounted, takes a back seat to the telling of the seedy personal history in this lurid account.

Sid James

by Cliff Goodwin, Century, 184pp, £15.99 (hb), ISBN 0 7126 7586 8

Though a bit dry and oddly lacking in humour despite its subject, this account of the *Carry On* series star is at least meticulous, covering James' early career as a hairdresser in South Africa, his partnership and eventual feud with Tony Hancock, the heyday of his career and his infatuation with Barbara Windsor. Apparently the man with the smuttiest laugh in British comedy was in reality "prudish" about sex, but carried on having affairs all the same.

Film criticism

Celluloid Ivy: Higher Education In the Movies, 1960-1990

by David B. Hinton, Scarecrow Press, 182pp, £22.50, ISBN 0 8108 2891 X
A survey of the representation of college and university life from *The Nutty Professor* to *School Daze* and of films depicting adolescents about to enter tertiary education, this PhD-thesis-turned-book is dull enough to put one off academia for life.

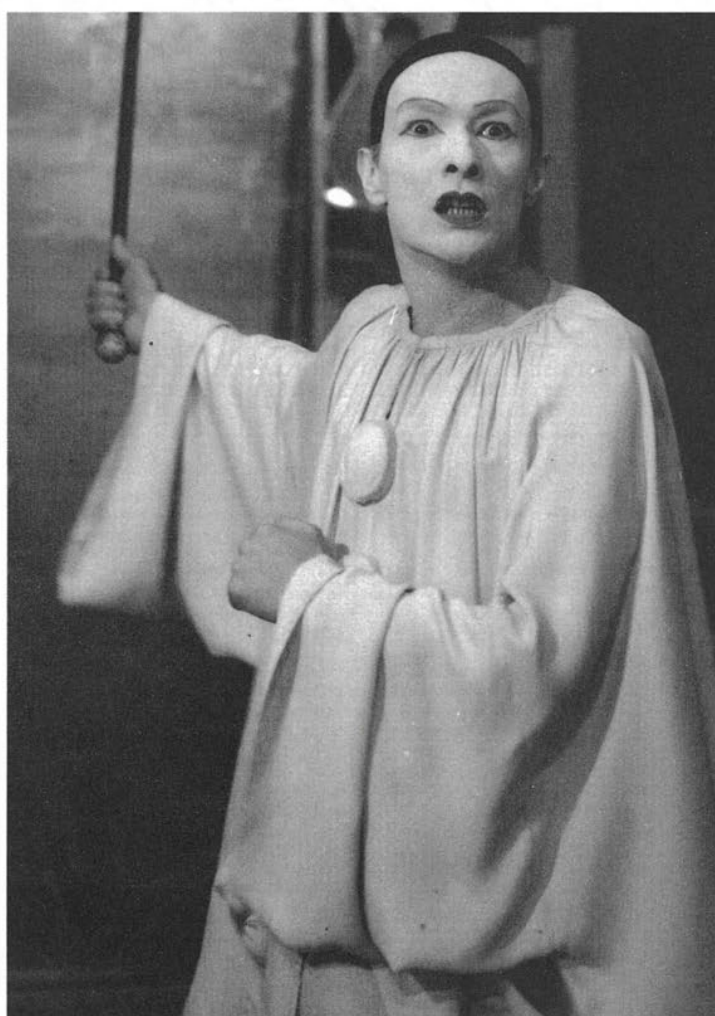
David Lynch

by Michel Chion, translated by Robert Julian, BFI, 210pp, £12.99, ISBN 0 85170 457

Given the contortions Lynch usually invokes in critics, Chion's thematic interpretations are refreshingly lucid and especially perceptive about the early student films and Lynch's use of sound. A book of two halves, the first works through the oeuvre chronologically, while the second offers a delightful "Lynch-Kit" comprising alphabetically organised mini-essays on recurring Lynchian motifs, such as alphabets, insects, smoke, and so on.

The Films of Luis Buñuel: Subjectivity and Desire

by Peter William Evans, Oxford, 202pp, £11.99, ISBN 0 19 815906 4



Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film
by Dudley Andrew, Princeton, 409pp, £19.95, ISBN 0 691 00883 3

A self-consciously poetic title for a solid and informative chronicle of French cinema in the "long decade" that started with Jean Vigo's *Surrealism* and climaxed with *Les Enfants*

Few will be surprised that this intelligent and eclectic study of cinema's great taboo-breaker absolves Buñuel of political correctness. But Evans, writing for an Hispanic Studies series, is as alert to gender issues as to the claims of auteurism and cultural context. He gives the Mexican melodramas their due as delirious family romances, making a shrewd comparison with Sirk, and offers sophisticated readings of female and male desire across the old Surrealist's oeuvre.

The Films of Steven Spielberg

by Douglas Brode, Citadel Press, 254pp, £14.99, ISBN 0 86369 905 7

Designed for the die-hard Spielberg fan, this reads like competently written production notes packaged up with predictable stills from the films of the world's wealthiest director/producer. Given to rather banal psychological insights about the childhood's influence on the work, it strains to establish Spielberg's higher-brow influences and falls short of covering his new production company.

du paradis', above. In between, Andrew excavates links between style and society in the dreamy fatalism of Marcel Carné and Julien Duvivier, with useful asides on the durable appeal of Jean Gabin, Jacques Prévert's dialogue and Lazare Meerson's design. A valuable group portrait of a decade remembered by many with increasing nostalgia by a scholar of the field.

Hollywood Cinema

by Richard Maltby and Ian Craven, Blackwell, 520pp, £15.99, ISBN 0 631 15732 8

This meaty textbook provides an excellent introduction to film studies by tackling the largest and most influential of the world's national cinemas. It covers most of the major variations on the theme: the history of the industry from start to present; stars and performance; trade journalism and academic criticism, and more. It's especially refreshing to see a chapter on "Technology" among the usual headings, such as "Genre" or "Narrative". Readable, though a little dry, this could neatly fill an awkward gap in the syllabus after the students have gnawed their way through Bordwell and Thompson.

Placing Movies:

The Practice of Film Criticism

by Jonathan Rosenbaum, University of California Press, 344pp, £12.95, ISBN 0 520 08633 3

Collections of criticism are usually dead-end publishing. Not in this

case, however. Rosenbaum's carefully organised anthology – a companion volume to his more straightforwardly autobiographical *Moving Places* – is a constant source of pleasure: eloquent, stimulating, insightful, always rigorous and above all, bristling with the kind of cultural cross-references and resonances that make for great critical writing. As important a work in its way as André Bazin's *Qu'est que le cinéma?* or Manny Farber's *Negative Space* in its ability to tell us more about films we think we know, and in its championship of the dying art of humanist criticism.

Post-Franco, Postmodern: The Films of Pedro Almodóvar

edited by Kathleen M. Vernon and Barbara Morris, Greenwood Press, 194pp, £49.50, ISBN 0 313 29245 0

A neatly selected and thoughtful series of essays which nod to rather than bow down before current American academic fashions. The overall aim is to examine Almodóvar not just as a post-modern artist (which is how he likes to see himself), but as a product of post-Franco Spain (which he has always denied being). A fuller filmography would have been helpful, but this would nonetheless be a highly recommendable item for reading lists and *cinéphile* bookshelves were it not for the ridiculous price tag.

The Phantom Empire

by Geoffrey O'Brien, W. W. Norton & Company, 281pp, £15.95, ISBN 0 393 0359 2

Distilled from countless hours of movie-viewing, Geoffrey O'Brien's book is a kind of impressionistic epistemology of the movies, reflecting on the stream of images that have embedded themselves in his consciousness. The prose is initially seductive, but the *Trout Fishing in America* principle – adopt an intriguing approach and apply it endlessly to a series of subjects – soon becomes tiresome.

Robert Altman: Hollywood Survivor

by Daniel O'Brien, Batsford, 144pp, £14.99, ISBN 0 7134 7481 5

A lacklustre analysis of the films and career of a film-maker who deserves better than he gets here. Though he has interesting things to say about the early work, O'Brien gets bogged down with too much plot paraphrase and shies from anything but the most perfunctory of analyses.

Valie Export: Fragments of the Imagination

by Roswitha Mueller, Indiana, 246pp, £21.99, ISBN 0 253 209250 0

Since the late 60s, Austrian artist Valie Export has been making the female body – often her own in early performance pieces – a provocative challenge to male spectatorship. This handsome if rather reverential survey traces her career from happenings to the feature-length films of 1976-84, and on into more recent computer-assisted explorations in cyberspace.

Film history

Censorship and the Permissive Society: British Cinema & Theatre, 1955-1965

by Anthony Aldgate, Clarendon Press
Oxford, 171pp, £9.99, ISBN 0 19 818352 6
A real disappointment: a dozen or so cut-and-paste case studies of film and play scripts (mainly the former) submitted for approval between 1955 (*Spare the Rod*) and 1965 (*Darling*). Aldgate stays so close to the specific that his general claims – in particular that there was something crucial about the decade in question – never really become clear. All opinions – even those from the present day – are quoted from other sources, making the whole thing read like a superior third-year-student essay. One expects more from an established cultural historian.

Claiming the Real: the Documentary Film Revisited

by Brian Winston, Cambridge, 301pp, £30, ISBN 0 521 47015 3

This could more accurately be subtitled “getting over Grierson”, since much of Winston’s energy goes on wrestling with the confusions and evasions of our glorious Griersonian legacy, to the exclusion of such non-Anglo wild cards as Chris Marker, or Claude Lanzmann, director of *Shoah*. But he’s sharp on the historical, ethnographic and especially the legal implications of filming reality.

Film and the First World War

edited by Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp, Amsterdam University Press, 264pp, £19.50, ISBN 90 5356 064 5

Academic conferences rarely make good books, but this selection from an Amsterdam gathering of historians scores better than most. Jerzy Toeplitz and Kristin Thompson demonstrate the value of making international comparisons, while Paolo Cherchi Usai calls for more open-minded trawling of the archives. But the plums are revelations like Joanne Bernardi on Japan’s little-known ‘pure film’ movement and Nicholas Hiley on how the British learned to behave in their picture palaces.

The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II

by Robert Fine, Scarecrow Press, 245pp, £29.25, ISBN 0 8108 2900 2

This stodgy overview of American propaganda films made during the Second World War is organised thematically to discuss such topics as anti-Japanese films, home front films, and pro-Russian and Chinese films and the like. Informative, but curiously old-fashioned and innocent of current notions of ideology.

Revising History:

Film and the Construction of a New Past

edited by Robert Rosenstone, Princeton, 255pp, £12.95 ISBN 0 691 02534 7
Telling stories about the past is what historians actually do, but many still ignore the importance of the global storytelling machine of cinema. These

intelligent essays stake a wide-ranging claim for the importance of films that contest familiar platitudes, such as British working-class solidarity in *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives* and *Manifest Destiny* in Alex Cox’s *Walker*, and those that confront the unsayable, like Hitler: *A Film from Germany* and *From the Pole to the Equator*.

The Studio System

edited by Janet Staiger, Rutgers University Press, 333pp, £13.95, ISBN 0 8135 2131 9
A series of previously published articles from the 70s and 80s which meticulously pursue the Holy Grail of neo-Marxist criticism: the link between the economic base of Hollywood and the narrative superstructure of the movies it produced. The quality is inevitably uneven but the level of scholarship makes this a stimulating read for the dedicated academic. Too often, though, the elaborate theoretical claims in the first half of an essay are not adequately applied to the specific case-study which follows.

Vital Crises in Italian Cinema:

Iconography, Stylistics, Politics

by P. Adams Sitney, University of Texas Press, 239pp, £13.25, ISBN 0 292 77688 8
A surprisingly conventional study of the post-war Italian canon, from Rossellini to Francesco Rosi, by the high priest of American modernism. Yet Sitney’s detailed knowledge of Italian literature and politics allows him to reveal the familiar classics of Visconti, Antonioni and Fellini as closely related to what Pasolini called the “vital crises” of Italian culture. A thoughtful, eminently civilised book.

With Fire and Sword: Italian Spectacles on American Screens, 1958-1968

by Patrick Lucanio, Scarecrow Press, 529pp, £60.75, ISBN 0 8108 2816 2

Catalogued here in this overpriced filmography is what author Lucanio dubs “neo-mythologism”, a body of Hercules-and-heaving-bosom films, a gaudy spectacle-laden genre which Peplum Features specialised in, and which De Sica and the Neo-Realists were reacting against.

Media studies

Celluloid Jukebox: Popular Music and the Movies Since the 50s

edited by Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton, BFI, 168pp, £11.95, ISBN 0 85170 507 3

Like a good jukebox in a favourite bar, this book offers a diverse selection of essays to suit a broad spectrum of tastes and interests. These range from the obligatory opening overview of the relationship between pop and film (accompanied by the obligatory disclaimer of comprehensiveness), through to concluding pithy bon-mots from pop-picking directors, including Alan Rudolph, Penelope Spheeris, and the ever-volatile Quentin Tarantino. Sandwiched in between are some excellent essays (on rock

documentaries and that oxymoronic concept, the British Pop Movie, among other topics) which nimbly move between academic trenchancy and more informal opining.

Cultural Remix:

Theories of Politics and the Popular

edited by Erica Carter, James Donald and Judith Squires, Lawrence & Wishart, 332pp, £14.99, ISBN 0 85315 794 4

Culled from the pioneering journal of cultural studies, *New Formations*, this presents muscular theoretical writings on topics ranging from black hairstyles and satellite dishes to democracy and the parliamentary debates on Section 28 (which prohibited the promotion of homosexuality). A challenging read, it reflects the complex paradigmatic crisis that has bedevilled the discipline in recent years.

In Front of the Children:

Screen Entertainment and Young Audiences

edited Cary Bazalgette and David Buckingham, BFI, 220pp, £14.99, ISBN 0 85170 453 0

Studies of children’s entertainment have been sparse until recently, so this collection of essays is a welcome contribution to a debate that has heated up considerably in the popular press in the wake of the Jamie Bulger killing. Some of the best writers in the field, such as Marsha Kinder and

Martin Barker, offer lucid, non-judgmental readings of texts ranging from *My Little Pony* to *Mortal Kombat*. Unavoidably, some of the texts discussed, such as *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, have been superseded by new favourites in the playground, but the intelligent methodological approaches applied here could be easily ‘morphed’ by scholars for use on more recent popular texts.

Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change

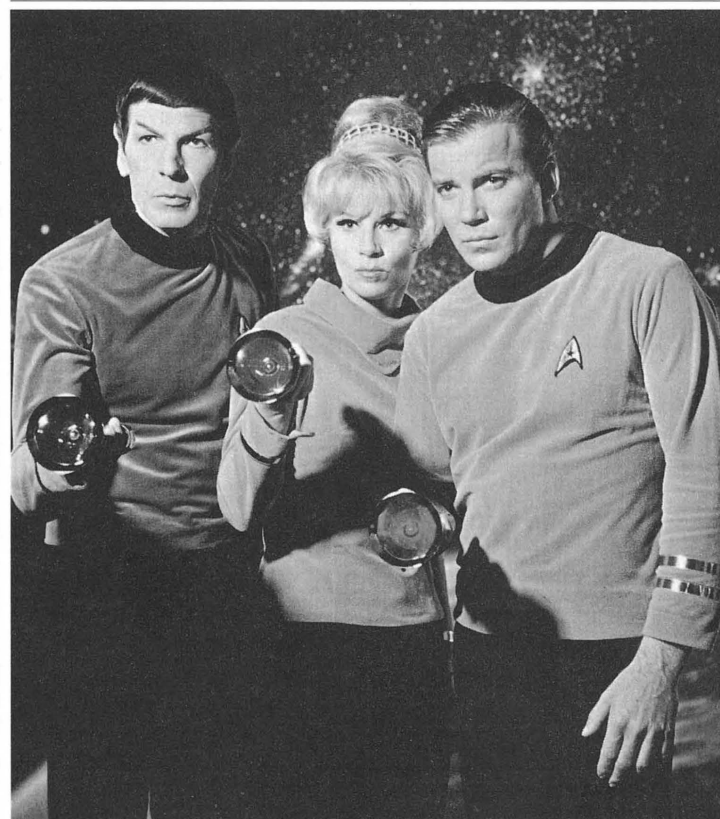
by Marie Gillespie, Routledge, 238pp, £12.99, ISBN 0 415 09675 8

An ethnographic study of how teenagers of South Asian descent living in Southall consume both British and Asian television and videos. Gillespie argues that her subjects use these narratives to help negotiate between the different cultural identities available to them. Well-meaning, but a bit shaky theoretically.

White Guys: Studies in Postmodern Domination & Difference

by Fred Pfeil, Verso, 269pp, £12.95, ISBN 1 85984 032 9

Always a provocative and frequently an amusing writer of substance, Pfeil turns his post-modernist gaze upon white male heterosexuality in a variety of cultural products, including such ‘male rampage’ films as *Die Hard* and *Lethal Weapon*.



Science Fiction Audiences:

Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek

by John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins, Routledge, 294pp, £12.99, ISBN 0 415 06141 5

Like a great deal of work done in the name of cultural studies these days, this effort seems to rest on shaky critical foundations, but presumably can justify itself because it

‘empowers’ those who have been hitherto marginalised. This investigates the shifting conceptions of value and pleasure that accrue around two of the most popular science fiction series in the history of television, and how their audiences interpret them. Tulloch and Jenkins draw interesting connections, but a few too many banal conclusions, making this truly the revenge of the nerds.

Screenplays and novelisations

Barcelona and Metropolitan:

Tales of Two Cities

by Whit Stillman, Faber and Faber, 281pp, £9.99, ISBN 0 571 17365 9

Stillman's two screenplays trip every bit as lightly, intelligently and entertainingly off the page as they do off the screen – maybe more so, in fact. Taken together, they go a long way towards supporting Graham Fuller's claim, in his eloquent introduction, that Stillman is "a rare and pleasingly literary voice in the increasingly inarticulate, blood-clotted world of popular cinema". "Literary", yes, though one might want to question the "popular".

Don Juan De Marco

novel by Jean Blake White, Signet, 233pp, £4.99, ISBN 0 45 118529 3

A reasonably efficient adaptation of the Marlon Brando and Johnny Depp vehicle by poet Jean Blake White, that smuggles in sly literary echoes. Neither a great nor a very popular film, one wonders why they've bothered to novelise it.

Muriel's Wedding

by P. J. Hogan, Fourth Estate, 140pp, £5.99, ISBN 1 85702 367 6

There are three good reasons for buying the screenplay to *Muriel's Wedding*. 1. Entertainment: it is funny, smart and engagingly rude – a rectal thermometer adroitly stuck up Australia's bum. 2. Information: instead of the usual partial cast list found in most screenplays, it includes the full on-screen credits. 3. Enlightenment: the back cover's bizarre array of corporate logos (including, for some reason, that of BBC 1FM) perfectly illustrates Hogan's dryly despairing account of the difficulties of raising production finance for films these days.

Naked and Other Screenplays

by Mike Leigh, Faber and Faber, 304pp, £10.99, ISBN 0 571 17386 1

Naked is a hit in the US and presto, the number of Mike Leigh screenplays available in print almost doubles (the "other" ones here are *Life is Sweet* and *High Hopes*). The scripts confirm the complexity and compassion – not to mention the brilliance – of the films. But what this volume really does is make one yearn for the scripts of Leigh's dozen or so television films (he is adamant about the term), which are not nearly as accessible to the video owner as the ones published here.

Rob Roy

novel by Donald McFarlan, Headline, 181pp, £4.99, ISBN 0 7472 5106 1
Blessed with a fairly intelligent screenplay to work with, McFarlan weaves in Wordsworth's poem 'Rob Roy's Grave' for extra literary credibility, and then goes mad with

pseudo-Walter Scott diction, thus confecting a tale by turns hilarious and strangely absorbing.

Screen Writings: Scripts and Texts by Independent Filmmakers

edited by Scott MacDonald, University of California Press, 331pp, \$20, ISBN 0 520 08025 4

This collection of scripts, notes, and texts from some of the most innovative films of the art cinema movement covers such avant-garde works as Michael Snow's *So Is This*, Yoko Ono's *Rape*, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx*, and many more works made between the 60s and 80s. MacDonald's pragmatic essays introducing each chapter offer sound guidance and background information for both students and scholars, contextualising each entry in terms of art and cinematic histories and the artists' backgrounds.

Tank Girl the Movie

novel by Martin Millar, Penguin, 186pp, £4.99, ISBN 0 14 024876 5

Written by the cult author of *Milk, Sulphate and Alby* *Starvation* and other books, this novelisation is interesting for the way its author pours derision on the heroine and indirectly on the movie itself, relocating the story and transmuting the setting into something like the milieu of his own stories. Sneaky fun.

Reference and miscellaneous

Bad Movies We Love

by Edward Margulies and Stephen Rebello, Marion Boyars, 330pp, £17.95, ISBN 0 7415 2992 3

Sharon Stone's chirpy 'foreword' to a book which trashes her own early efforts says it all. This is cynical let's-all-make-some-money stuff which doesn't know the difference between Sirk, Minnelli, Vidor and Ray or *Can't Stop the Music* and *King Kong Lives*. The bibliography includes James Agee and Pauline Kael along with *Movie Stars in Bathtubs*.

Cinema is 100 Years Old

by Emmanuelle Toulet, Thames and Hudson New Horizons series, 175pp, £6.95, ISBN 0 500 30051 8

First published in France in 1988, this is a basic and decidedly Gallic view of the origins of the cinema, documenting machinery (and to a lesser extent movies) between 1895 and 1906. Nicely illustrated if rather busily laid out (pictures, captions, text and section introductions jostle for space on the page), it boasts a moderately interesting selection of documents and a selective chronology. Hard to say who it's for, though.

Chronicle of the Cinema

edited by Robyn Karney, Dorling Kindersley, 920pp, £29.95(hb), ISBN 0 7513 3001 9



The Laurel & Hardy Encyclopedia
by Glenn Mitchell, Batsford, 203pp, £14.99, ISBN 0 7134 7711 3

A labour of love (launched, appropriately enough, on April Fool's Day), Mitchell's book is exhaustive without being exhausting, lavishly illustrated and packed with information, not just on 'the boys', but on their co-stars, directors and co-writers, too. A limited subject but an exemplary book.

Massively weighty, silver-jacketed and bursting with illustrations, this *Chronicle* (not to be confused with *Sight and Sound's* own) is a coffee-table-breaker of a book. Like the newspaper article-style format of the Longman *Chronicle of the 20th Century*, it works swiftly through the years in the present tense, briskly covering the world, pausing every 100 pages to provide essays that tend to favour Hollywood over other national cinemas. Well researched, but its real glory lies in its glossy reproductions of original posters.

The Encyclopedia of TV Science Fiction

by Roger Fulton, Bantam, 727pp, £16.99, ISBN 1 85283 953 8

This new updated version sports a charmingly effete shot of Mr Spock on its cover and numerous new entries (including *The X-Files*, *Wild Palms*, *Babylon 5* and many more) on the genre that spawns more televisual progeny than a rampant *Star Trek* tribble. Drawing extensively on *TV Times* listings, this isn't the place to look for trenchant criticism, but it ought to prove an orgasmic read for trivia buffs.

Derek Jarman's Garden

by Derek Jarman with photographs by Howard Sooley, Thames and Hudson, 144pp, £14.95, ISBN 0 500 01656 9
A luscious collection of luminous, finely detailed photographs

accompany uncharacteristically gentle and domestic prose from Jarman about his beloved wild and random Dungeness garden, which is festooned with junkyard sculptures and was the real star of his 1990 film *The Garden*. A revealing counterpoint to the angry and fierce persona he projected in his last films, this is a true treasure for Jarman completists and creative gardeners alike.

Freedom of the Press Throughout the World: 1995 Report

Reporters Sans Frontières, John Libbey, 362pp, £18, ISBN 0 86196 523 X

An invaluable source book for researchers and anyone else interested in human rights, censorship and the media, this catalogues last year's violations and infractions against the freedom of speech on a country-by-country basis. Among many useful statistics and much enlightening information, the most chilling fact revealed is that 103 journalists worldwide were murdered last year, the highest figure in the history of the profession.

The MAP-TV Guide to Film and Television Collections in Europe

edited by Daniela Kirchner, Blueprint, 663pp, £75 (hb), ISBN 1 85713 015 4

Of interest mainly to film researchers, librarians and archivists, this highly specialised but extremely useful guide to film archives covers 1,900 collections in over 40 European countries. Contains practical information on holdings, catalogue systems, viewing facilities and much more, clearly laid out and thoughtfully indexed by country (in both local languages and English) and by subject.

A Political Companion to American Film

edited by Gary Crowdus, Fitzroy Dearborn, 524pp, £45 (hb), ISBN 1 884964 53 2

A collection of essays analysing various topics (such as film-makers, stars, selected genres, critical issues, and much more) from a political (broadly left-wing) perspective. Writing quality is patchy at times, but generally solid, while the choice of topics ranges from useful entries ("The Communist Party in Hollywood"), through quirky but clever ones ("The Drive-In Theater"), to the downright perplexing: why is Frances Farmer the only woman to merit her own entry? One for libraries, but not necessarily home use.

Wales and Cinema: the First 100 Years

by David Berry, University of Wales Press, 567pp, £45, ISBN 0 7083 1256 X

A big baggy monster of a book that makes the most of Wales' intermittent history of indigenous film-making, from the pioneer showman-producer William Haggart to recent Welsh-language feature successes, such as *Hedd Wyn*. That Wales has often been travestied on screen and deserted by most of its talent is undeniable, but Berry manages to show that a nation's cinema can be more than the sum of its scattered parts.

The shock of the old

Films have the power to possess you. A gay friend's most cherished item of clothing was a red Harrington jacket like the one James Dean wore in *Rebel Without a Cause*. The film that caused me to become a punk and created the defining image for my late teens was *Taxi Driver*. I tried to walk like Travis Bickle, bow-legged with my hands thrust into the pockets of a bomber jacket; I bought jeans like Travis Bickle; eventually I even had a Mohican like Travis Bickle.

Think of those celebrity questionnaires: "When and where were you at your happiest?" "What's your favourite sandwich filling?" We've all secretly compiled our own list of answers. But when you're asked what your favourite film is, how do you work out what you're going to say?

One's most impressionable years are one's teenage years. The first time you see a film or listen to a pop song it can become inextricably woven into your emotional life, always retaining those first associations, always tied in with who you were when you saw it. Everyone's favourite James Bond is the one they saw as a kid. I'm a Sean Connery man, but – difficult as it is for me to comprehend – there is a whole generation for whom Roger Moore is 007. There are kids growing up today who will only accept Pierce Brosnan.

So when this mythical celebrity questionnaire asks me what my favourite film is, what will I say? I'll say what I always say:

Charles Higson, who has written for Harry Enfield and is co-screenwriter of 'Suite 16', released this month, recalls his childhood exposure to the shock of 'The Wild Bunch'

Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*. Because when I first saw it, it had a profoundly physical effect on me. I had never been so totally excited by a film before or since.

I think I must have been about 14. I was at home. I remember settling down with my parents for a nice family evening watching a western, but it was fairly obvious from the start that this wasn't going to be *Stagecoach*. A lot has been written about the scene of the little kids feeding the live scorpion to the swarming ants, watching the ensuing battle and then setting fire to the lot of them, but it remains a perfect image for the rest of the film and we know instantly that everything's going to end in tears.

The whole of the opening sequence is extraordinary, a terrifying, gut-wrenching triumph of bravura editing and physical direction. Three separate groups of characters are introduced; William Holden and his pals – "The Wild Bunch" – riding into town disguised as soldiers to carry out a bank raid, Robert Ryan and his hired guns waiting on the rooftops to ambush them, and the blissfully unaware, God-fearing townsfolk holding a temperance parade in the town. The tension is screwed right up, everything adding to it (even the credits, which are incorporated into the sequence), at last everything explodes into awful violence. Everyone gets killed by everyone else.

It was screen violence such as I had never seen before, and neither had my parents;

the TV was turned off. Luckily we had another, an old-fashioned black-and-white job with a bad picture that lived in the spare room. I rushed to it and carried on watching alone, transfixed. *The Wild Bunch* is a long film and after the first sequence there is very little violence until the end. What happens in between is fairly gentle, the few action sequences played almost for laughs. You couldn't get away with this in a film nowadays, even though in many ways *The Wild Bunch* can be seen as the father of the modern action film (right down to the use of American military Smith and Wesson automatics so beloved of Tarantino and his pals).

But in this central section we get to know the characters and care about them. We get to be seduced by Peckinpah's moral vision of proud outlaws who are doomed relics from a heroic past. Much has been said about Peckinpah's violence and his anti-social macho attitudes, but the scene in which the Bunch ride out of the peasant village to meet their fate, with a Mexican lament playing and everyone waving, is for me one of the most moving and romantic in cinema. The rest of the film is in a sense a repeat of the opening sequence on a longer and larger scale, leading to the famous bloodbath, which begins with my favourite two lines from cinema.

"Let's go."

"Why not?"

It may not look like much on paper, but for me, this is magisterial scriptwriting: the whole meaning of a film condensed into almost nothing. These two lines sum up the nihilism, sense of doom and heroic, redeeming, self-sacrifice which haunt the film. Then the four of them, William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, Warren Oates and Ben Johnson get up and march to this waiting doom. They go to rescue Angel, the one innocent member of the bunch, who is being held captive by Mapache the bandit chief. In front of his army, Mapache slits Angel's throat, and Holden shoots him. Then there is an extraordinary moment of stillness, expectation. What the fuck will come now?

It happens: the apocalypse. There is an orgiastic release of violence. Peckinpah's approach has been called Homeric, but for me it's positively Wagnerian in its scope and its glorification of suicide. The ending is the *Götterdämmerung*, as the Wild Bunch die bloodily and spectacularly, taking a thousand Mexican bandits with them. Once the film was over I was exhausted and in a state of high nervous excitement, I wanted to go out in a blaze of glory, I wanted a Gatling gun, I wanted to be pierced by a hundred bullets.

I bounced around the room, I couldn't sleep. It was that physical effect, that desire to become the characters in the film that knocked me out.

The celebrity questionnaires also often ask the question "How would you like to die?" Most people put "Peacefully in my sleep". But I'm afraid I would still put "Spectacularly – like the Wild Bunch."

'Suite 16', is reviewed on page 56 of this issue



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starring (X)
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ROBERT RYAN EDMOND O'BRIEN
WARREN OATES JAIME SANCHEZ
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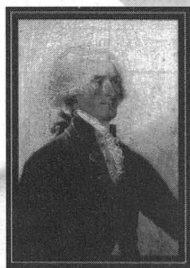


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screen griots

John Akomfrah (Ghana/UK)

Aasma Al Bakri (Egypt)

Roy Ames (UK)

Imruh Bakari (St. Kitts/UK)

Bassek Ba Kobhio (Cameroon)

John Badenhoet (South Africa)

Ola Balogun (Nigeria)

Ferd Boughedir (Tunisia)

Mbye Cham (Gambia/US)

Tahar Cheria (Tunisia)

Cheick Oumar Cissoko (Mali)

Manthia Diawara (Mali/US)

Samir Farid (Egypt)

Teshome Gabriel (Ethiopia/US)

Haile Gerima (Ethiopia/US)

Mariam Hima (Niger)

Med Hondo (Mauritania)

Rose Issa (Lebanon/UK)

T Mahosa (Zimbabwe)

Kobena Mercer (Ghana/UK)

V Y Mudimbe (US/ Congo)

Idrissa Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso)

Kwate Nee Owoo (Ghana)

Jim Pines (UK/US)

Colin Prescod (UK)

Nourredine Sali (Morocco)

Ousmane Sembene (Senegal)

Ella Shohat (US)

Clyde Taylor (US)

Moufida Tlati (Tunisia)

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (Kenya/US)

Claire Watkins (US)

Peter Wollen (UK)

REVIEWS

Reviews,
synopses and
full credits for
all the month's
new films

Asterix Conquers America (Asterix in Amerika)

Germany 1994

Director: Gerhard Hahn

Certificate

U

Distributor

20th Century Fox

Production Company

Extrafilm Produktion

Supported by The

Berlin Film

Fund/Filmboard Berlin-

Brandenburg

GMBH/Filmförderungs-

anstalt Berlin

Executive Producer

Gerhard Hahn

Producer

Jürgen Wohlrahe

Line Producer

Christa Kistner

Production Co-ordinators

Helle Hansen

Steve Kellener

Madrid:

Chris Doyle

Unit Production Manager

Jürgen Polaszek

Production Managers

Ciara Breslin

Lucia Gomez

Jacquie Davies

Elena Gomez

Screenplay

Thomas Platt

Rhett Rooster

Based on an idea

by Albert Uderzo

Pierre Tchernia

From the 22nd Asterix

cartoon *The Great*

Crossing by

René Goscinny,

Albert Uderzo

Dialogue

Robin Lyons

Andrew Offiler

Additional Indian:

Bill Speers

Camera Supervisors

Barry Newton

Thorsten Falke

Wolfgang Scharff

Animation Directors

Bill Speers

Madrid:

Angel Izquierdo

Lead Animators

Dave Brewster

Jørgen Leerdam

Animators

Daniel Lafrance

Borge Ring

Gabor Pichler

Francisco Alaminos

Manuel Almela

Edson R. Basarin

Nancy Beiman

Dave Boudreau

Rune Brandt Bennicke

Alberto Conejo

Donnachada Daly

Tara Donovan

Stefan Fjeldmark

Manuel G. Galiana

Chuck Gammage

Carmen Gonzalez

Michael Helmuth

Hansen

Paul Jesper

Keven Johnson

Martin Madsen

Jesper Møller

Jamie Oliff

Matt O'Callaghan

Wendy Perdue

Chris Sauve

Gordon Stanfield

Juan A. Torres

Roger Vizard

Johnny Zeuthen

Miguel Alaminos

Meelis Arulepp

Jan Baudouin de

Courtenay

Doug Bennett

Eric Bouillette

Juan J. Bravo

Jesse Cosio

Rafael Diaz

Jeff Etter

Brad Forbush

Fernando Gallego

Anna Gellert Nielsen

Ulf Grenzer

Stefan Herrmann

Jeff Johnson

Mark Koetsier

Jens Leganger Larsen

Jamie Mason

Piotr Morawski

Tahsin Özgür

Dana O'Connor

José Sanchez

Brian Schindler

David Stephan

Darren Vandenburg

John Williamson

Susan Zitka

Dick Zondag

Special Effects:

Robert Byrne

Brian McSweeney

Kathy Quaife-Hodge

Michael Ekbladh

Volker Pajatsch

Matthias Sernow

In-Betweeners

Julio Altozano

Mike Demur

Roberto F. Johns

Mario Kuchinke-Hofer

Sacramento Martinez

Marc Preiser

Joaquin Royo

Jiwiun Shin

Gerd Brammer

Claudia Grey

Karen Kewell

Angel Marcato

Carmen Nunez

Dejan Rakas

Tobias Schwarz

Lech Smigaj

Lynn Yamaski

Anne Brand

Cordula Jarmuske

Esperanza Konomi

Roberto Marcato

Helena Podlaska

Chris Ross

Hans Serner

Allen Swerling

3-D Computer Animation

"Pizza" Opening

Sequence:

Alexander Borchert

Monika Tuschek

Storm Sequence/Digital

Effects:

Mental Images

Technical Directors:

Gerald Gutschmidt

Gregor Lakner

Background Supervisor

Michel Guerin

Backgrounds

Christoph Baum

Sean Eckett

Miguel Gil

Inge Daveloose

Zoe Evamy

Randy Pusch

Rudi Stussi

Storyboard

Bill Speers

David Brewster

Antonio Zurera

Tashin Özgür

Andrew Knight

Michael Ekbladh

Miguel Gaban

Rick Morrison

Juan C. Cerezo

Sahin Ersöz

Teresa Valero

Update:

Markus Kempken

Check Co-ordination

Mark Hodgkinson

Eimear Joyce

Checkers

Gerhild Arndt

Brian Gilmore

Corine Marcel

Marianne Rousseau

Anne Tweedy

Sharon Bridgeman

Almut Lubkoll

David McGrath

Jill Tudor

Liz Wassel

Layout

Robert Clark

Peggy Hawley

Dave Merritt

Robert Davies

Anne Chevalier

Marco Cinelli

Brendan Houghton

Sven Höffer

Jerry Benninger

Anthony Christov

David Day

Daniel Moignot

Panagiotis Rapas

Simon Varela

Olsen Groiseau

Arlan Jewell

Dan Mills

Michael O'Mara

Gyula Szabo

Kevyn Wallace

David Womersley

Colour Co-ordination

Agnieszka Winters

Colour Styling

Ann McCormick

Model Sheets

Dave Brewster

Andrew Knight

Tashin Özgür

Bill Speers

Digital Editors

Ulrich Steinvorth

Ringo Waldenburger

Editor

Ulrich Steinvorth

Special Effects Supervisors

Michael Ekbladh

Robert Byrne

Titles

Trickatelier

Thomas Wilk

Music

Harold Faltermeyer

Orchestrations

Andi Slavik

Songs

"We Are One People" by

Harold Faltermeyer,

David Cooke,

performed by Aswad,

Soloman; "Say

Goodbye" by Harold

Faltermeyer, Magda La

Bonté, David Cooke,

performed by Bonnie

Tyler; "Always" by

Harold Faltermeyer,

Magda La Bonté, David

Cooke, performed by

Wild Kit, Matthias

Achilles, Michael

Ellwanger; "Dance,

Dance, Dance (Under

the Moon)" by Harold

Faltermeyer, David

Cooke, performed by

Right Said Fred

Sound Mixers

Manfred Arbter

Music:

Uli Fisher

Michael Strowig

David Cooke

Sound Effects

Harry Schnitzler

Max Hoskins

Voices

John Rye

Narrator

Craig Charles

Asterix

Howard Lew Lewis

Obelix

Henry McGee

Caesar

Geoffrey Baydon

Getafix

Christopher Biggins

Lucullus

7,622 feet

85 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

● Gaul, 50 BC. A village of plucky Gauls, including wily Asterix and strongman Obelix, have staved off the Roman army's attacks with the help of

a magic potion, brewed by druid Getafix, that makes them invulnerably strong. Unfortunately, a ruck amongst the villagers results in most of the potion being spilt, necessitating Getafix to make a new batch. Back in

the small French theme park based on the Asterix comic strip, apparently soared, boosted by disgruntled Europeans registering their disgust at this latest incursion of American cultural imperialism.

National stereotypes of the relatively inoffensive kind are the stuff that the famous comic strip by writer René Goscinny and artist Albert Uderzo has always traded on – the British are stuffy prigs, the Germans humourless barbarians and so on – and it is one of the most popular and widely translated and disseminated comics in the European Union. Being specific to European history, however, and full of in-jokes that Americans 'just don't get', Asterix has never sold well in America except amongst expatriate children.

This latest film adaptation of an Asterix tale, the seventh to date since *Asterix the Gaul* in 1967, pokes amusing fun at this intercontinental cultural animosity without cutting as close to the bone as the comics sometimes do. This is a concession to American sensibilities which the strip has never bothered with, but it helps make the film's American theme potentially sellable in the States. The Native Americans that Asterix and his friends meet speak a comic gibberish lingo, assembled from words that every Yankee schoolchild knows were indeed originally native: "Sarasota pensacola winnebago," intones the chief solemnly. It's a parody analogous to the comic strip's treatment of European languages, one that never robs the parodied nations of their dignity. The film-makers show a clear understanding of the inhibitions imposed on satire by political correctness, as well as the fact that they're about to compete with Disney's revisionist version of early American history, *Pocahontas*. Despite these precautions and any vestiges of Euro-pride, however, the Disney film will probably fling *Asterix Conquers America* out of the merchandising and box-office arena, as efficiently as a Roman catapult.

Which is a shame because this sweet little movie never patronises its audience and it whizzes along at a merry pace. Lovingly faithful to the graphic look of the original strip, it sports some decent character animation by a pan-European team of artists. The faces of the native Americans are well caricatured without edging into racist distortions. The storm effects and water – always a good test of animation quality – are nicely rendered. This is the first Asterix movie to be made with English voice actors from the start, and the film-makers must have thought the casting of *Red Dwarf* star Craig Charles as the voice of Asterix would have been a selling point both here and in the States. His croaky Liverpudlian accent fits the character snugly, its contrast to the plummy-sounding Caesar adding a class conflict spin to the story. Given their geographic specificity, however, there is little hope that the lucrative American mass audience, imaginatively reared in Disneyland, will 'get' any of these vocal subtleties.

Leslie Felperin

Barnabo of the Mountains (Barnabo delle Montagne)

France/Italy/Switzerland 1994

Director: Mario Brenta

Certificate

12

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Production Companies

Nautilus Film S.R.L.

(Italy)/Les Films

Number One

(France)/Flach Film

(France)/In association

with RAI-Radio

Televisione Italiana –

RAI UNO/T&C. A.G. Film

(Switzerland)/Istituto

Luce/SSR/RTSI

Televisione Svizzera/

Federal Department

of Culture

With financial

assistance from

Presidency of the

Council of Ministers/

Department of

Entertainment/

Eurimages Fund of the

Council of Europe/

European Script Fund

Producers

Tommaso Dazzi

RAI:

Gabriella Lazzoni

Co-producers

Marcel Hoehn

France:

Pierre Kalfon

Jean-François Lepetit

Georges Chappedelaine

Production Supervisors

Gianluigi Bruni

Vincenzo Iuvale

Production Manager

Bruno Tribbioli

Assistant Director

Enrico Soci

Screenplay

Angelo Pasquini

Mario Brenta

Screenplay Collaboration

Francesco Alberti

Enrico Soci

Based on the novel

by Dino Buzzati

Director of Photography

Vincenzo Marano

Editor

Roberto Missiroli

Production Designer

Giorgio Bertolini

Costume Design

Paola Rossetti

Make-up

Ronald Haldimann

Music/Music Arrangements

Stefano Caprioli

Music Extracts

"Quintetto Op.163

in DO Maggiore",

"Quartetto n.14 in

Re Minore", "Sonata

Op.78 in Sol Maggiore"

by Franz Schubert,

performed by Francesca

Giuffrè, Antonio

Pellegrino (violin),

Maurizio Bosone (viola),

Francesco Sorrentino

(violoncello), Carla

Tutino (contrabbasso),

Antonio Verdone

(corno inglese)

Sound

Laurent Barbey

Sound Editors

Alessandro Perpignani

Giorgio Venturoli

Sound Mixer

Daniilo Sterbini

Mountain Consultants

Maurizio Vanzo

Valerio Quinz

Mario Dibona

Armourer

Basilio Patrizi

Cast

Marco Pauletti

Barnabo

Duilio Fontana

Berton

Carlo Caserotti

Molo

Antonio Vecellio

Marden

Angelo Chiesura

Del Colle

Alessandra Milan

Ines

Elisa Gasperini

Grandmother

Marco Tonin

Darrio

Francesca Rita Giovannini

Toni's Widow

Pine Tosca

Emigrant's Leader

Alessandro Uccelli

Young Emigrant

Mario Da Pra

Inspector

Gianni Ballo

Captain

Daniele Zannantonio

Mayor

Angelo Fausti

Haircutter

Armando Cesco Gaspare

Imerio Bau

Carlo De Martin Topranin

Bortolo Nicolao

Roberto Ronzon

Forest Rangers

Sergio De Martin Fabbro

Gildo Zanderigo

Eugenio De Mario

Bortolo Della Putta

Poachers

Gianni Pezzo

Medical Official

Severino Cristel

Engineer

Pieraugenia De Meo

Mayor

Flavio Mellini

Priest

Mario Cardinal De Lorenzo

Gianni Langenwalter

Augusto De Meo

Giuseppe De Michel

Eminent Citizens

Antonio Greggio

Luigi Greggio

Edoardo Tamiso

Emigrants

Aurelio Marzolla

Armourer

Marzia Alberti

Girl at Ball

Marco Antoniazzi

Filippo Corisello

Francesco Cian

Children

11,219 feet

125 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles

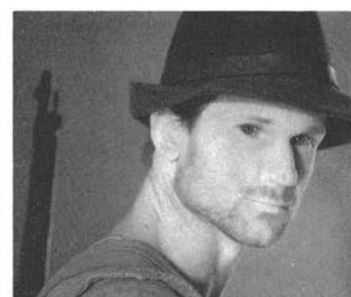
The Dolomite Mountains, some time after the First World War. A mountain ranger, stalking smugglers, is shot dead. His murder creates a vacancy which is filled by Barnabo, a young forester with a love of climbing. Barnabo and his co-rangers' main task is to guard a weapons cache hidden high in the rock face. He is a peaceable sort, with no enthusiasm for hunting, who is looked upon by his boss, Del Colle, as a surrogate son. The poachers kill Del Colle. This sparks off a massive hunt, but the rangers find no trace of the murderers. Much later, during winter, Barnabo acts on a hunch that the smugglers are nearby and goes up into the mountains with a colleague. Sure enough, the thieves are spotted. There is gunfire and Barnabo's colleague is injured. He has the chance to intervene, but stays skulking behind a rock.

Dismissed for his perceived cowardice, Barnabo comes down from the mountain and visits the small village where he believes his cousin lives. When he learns the cousin is dead, he finds work as a farm labourer with an innkeeper and her daughter. Some impoverished travellers on their way to a new life in Argentina happen by. Barnabo wants to join them, but there is no room for him in their party. Eventually, he receives a letter, inviting him to return to the mountains. He is not formally accepted back into the Force, but is given tedious work guarding an old barracks. One day, he again has a hunch that the smugglers are in the vicinity. He climbs high into the mountains, armed with a rifle, and soon gets an eagle eye view of the renegades below. He has plenty of opportunity to shoot, but realises that they are impoverished old men with frost bitten limbs. He allows them to escape.

In Mario Brenta's third feature, landscape is treated with so much awe that character and plot development seem trifles. The film is based on a novel by Dino Buzzati, but it is not a conventional adaptation: Brenta claims it is more than a decade since he actually read the book. His movie version is deliberately opaque, relying on hazy memory rather than chapter and verse of the original.

A lack of dialogue adds to the dream-like quality. The actors, all amateurs, are as expressionless as the mountains they clamber over. Their faces are shot in lingering close-ups that capture every last wrinkle. At times the movie resembles a natural history documentary. It is certainly short on dramatic tension. Images of trees and distant peaks are carefully composed, but seem more like stills than moving pictures. There is something cold and very distant about the project. The sheer monumentality of the settings is alienating.

Not that the protagonists' problems are entirely ignored. The film is set shortly after the First World War, and purports to deal with an on-going war between forest rangers and smugglers. There are occasional references to hunger and unemployment: when Barnabo is sent down from the hills in



Peak Practice: Marco Pauletti

disgrace, he takes the first job on offer, labouring in the fields. Here, he comes across some poor workers who, sickened by the lack of opportunity in post-war Italy, are on their way to Argentina, where they hope to make themselves a better life. In these scenes, though, Brenta is less concerned with the social and economic crises of the day than with taking a mystical look at pastoral life. There are fetishised images of Barnabo, converted from mountaineer into archetypal peasant, scything the corn and carrying out his onerous daily tasks.

On one level, the film is structured as a conventional rites-of-passage drama. Barnabo has failed in his job – he was too cowardly or too detached to apprehend the smugglers when he had the chance – and must atone for his misdeeds to prove his own maturity. On another, it is religious parable. Barnabo is something of a latterday prophet. From time to time, he develops stigmata on his hands. There are weird moments of epiphany when he sees the sunlight catch the mountain. The simplicity and silence of his life as he contemplates the world around him, his refusal to harm animals (even to shoot a pigeon) and the way he appears, as if from nowhere, heightens the sense that this is some sort of Christian allegory.

To say there are longueurs would be an understatement. At times, the ponderous deliberation of each fresh scene is infuriating. If Barnabo looks in the direction of the fireplace, there's sure to be a protracted shot of the embers glowing. If he gazes upward, we must see the sky with him. The director has clearly instructed his actors not to betray a flicker of emotion. Whether they're impassive or simply wooden is a moot point. Despite the scarcity of dialogue, the film is far from silent. Twittering birds screech their way along the soundtrack and there is plenty of plaintive violin music.

It takes a while to adjust to the lugubrious gait with which the story progresses. Perhaps, the film's excruciatingly slow rhythm is deliberate. One is reminded of Walter Benjamin's remark: "If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation. Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience." This soporific example of the Italian sublime comes without the slightest trace of irony or humour. Nevertheless, in its own quietly mesmerising way, it's a film of considerable formal beauty.

Geoffrey Macnab

Batman Forever

USA 1995

Director: Joel Schumacher

Certificate

PG
Distributor: Warner Bros
Production Company: Warner Bros
Executive Producers: Benjamin Melniker, Michael E. Uslan
Producers: Tim Burton, Peter MacGregor-Scott

Associate Producer: Mitchell Dauterive
2nd Unit Co-producer: Kevin J. Messick

Unit Production Manager: Ralph Burris
Location Manager: Laura Sode-Matteson

2nd Unit Directors: David Hogan
Underwater Unit: Conrad Palmisano

Assistant Directors: William M. Elvin, Alan Edmisten, Molly M. Mayeux

Eric Oliver
2nd Unit: Steve Buck

Jerram Swartz
Casting: Mali Finn

Associate: Emily Schweber
Screenplay: Lee Batchler

Janet Scott Batchler
Akiva Goldsman
Story: Lee Batchler

Janet Scott Batchler
Based on the Batman characters by Bob Kane

Script Supervisors: Sharron Reynolds, Enriquez

2nd Unit: Connie Papineau
Director of Photography: Stephen Goldblatt

2nd Unit Director of Photography: Gary Holt

Visual Effects Photography: Les Bernstein

Bruce Logan
Miniature Photography: The Chandler Group

Executive Producer: Terry Clotiaux
Producer: Kurt Williams

Effects Supervisor: Don Baker
Director: Tim Angulo

Motion Control Camera Operator: Mark Hardin

Underwater Photography: Peter Romano

Aerial Photography: Frank Holgate
Camera Operators: Ray de la Motte

Robert K. Ulland
Visual Effects: James Balsam

2nd Unit: Joseph Thibo
Peter Gulla

Mark Van Loon
Theatrical Lighting Design: John Tedesco

Mike Garrett
Video/Computer Supervisor: Elizabeth Radley

Visual Effects: Head Supervisor: John Dykstra

Production Supervisor: Jo Ann Knox

Supervisors: Eric Durst, Boyd Shermis

Andrew Adamson

David Stump
Art Director: James Hegedus

Post-production Supervisor: Nick Davis

Associate Production Supervisor: Jennifer Bell

Editor: Miller Drake

Pacific Title Digital Visual Effects

Executive Producer: Joe Gareri

Supervisor: David Sosalla

Producer: Lisa Kelly

Co-ordinator: Jennifer Scheer

Artists: Mimi Abers, Patrick Phillips

Olivier Sarda
Greg Kostami

Special Visual Effects

Illusion Arts: Syd Dutton

2nd Unit: Bill Taylor

Model Shop

Supervisors: Michael Joyce

Modelmakers: Larry Deunger

David Emery
Alan Faucher

Bryson Gerard
Greg Stuhl

Kenneth Swenson
Jason Kaufman

Miniatures

Grant McCune Design

Supervisor: Grant McCune

Chief Modelmakers: Sharron Reynolds

Enriquez
2nd Unit: Connie Papineau

Director of Photography: Stephen Goldblatt

2nd Unit Director of Photography: Gary Holt

Visual Effects Photography: Les Bernstein

Bruce Logan
Miniature Photography: The Chandler Group

Executive Producer: Terry Clotiaux

Producer: Kurt Williams

Effects Supervisor: Don Baker

Director: Tim Angulo

Motion Control Camera Operator: Mark Hardin

Underwater Photography: Peter Romano

Aerial Photography: Frank Holgate

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Robert K. Ulland
Visual Effects: James Balsam

2nd Unit: Joseph Thibo
Peter Gulla

Mark Van Loon
Theatrical Lighting Design: John Tedesco

Mike Garrett
Video/Computer Supervisor: Elizabeth Radley

Visual Effects: Head Supervisor: John Dykstra

Pixel Magic
Additional Digital Compositing: Pacific Ocean Post

Digital Film
Effects/Animation: Pacific Data Images

Supervisor: Richard Chung

Producer: Les Hunter

Technical Supervisors: Dick Walsh

Phillipe Gluckman
Wendy Rogers

Animation Supervisor: Raman Hui

Animator: Craig Ring

Technical Animators: Apurva Shah

Drew Olbrich
Animation/Visual Effects

Rhythm & Hues Studios
Digital Effects

Supervisor: Kathy White

Digital Effects
Producer: Teresa Cheng

Computer Graphics
Supervisor: Suponwich 'Juck' Somsaman

Batwing Underwater Sequence

VFX
Supervisor: Gregory L. McMurry

Warner Bros Imaging Technology

Supervisor: John Scheele

Production Manager: Amy Harrington

Art Director: Bob Scifo

CG Cityscape Design: Lance Hammer

Curtis Auspurgier
Computer Graphics Artist

Mary Locatell
Computer Animation

Brian Callier
David Watkinson

Editor
Dennis Virkler

Production Designer
Barbara Ling

Art Directors
Chris Burian-Mohr

Joseph P. Lucky
Set Design

James Bayliss
John Berger

Sean Haworth
Peter Kelly

Gene Nollmann
Brad Ricker

Patricia Klawonn
Set Decorator

Elise 'Crickit' Rowland
Set Dresser

David Ronan
Illustrators

James Carson
Robert Consing

Tim Flattery
Joe Griffith

Sean Hargreaves
Marty Kline

David Lowery
Peter Ramsey

Chris Ross
Oliver Scholl

Supervising Scenic Artist
Scott Valdes

Head Sculptors
Yarek Alfer

Rick Baker/Cinovation
Studio Crew: Matt Rose

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Tommy Fisher

Special Effects Foreman
Scott R. Fisher

Head Animatronic Designer/Pup

Mark Setrakian
Animatronics/Puppeteers

Bat Boat
VIP Marine

Costume Design
Bob Ringwood

Ingrid Ferrin
Costume Supervisors

Jim Tyson
Elaine Maser

Batsuit Wrangler
Day Murch

Robin Suit Wrangler
Ed Fincher

Key Make-up
Ve Neill

Special Make-up Effects
Rick Baker

Key Hairstylist
Yolanda Toussieng

Title Design
Anthony Goldschmidt

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Music
Elliott Goldenthal

Music Conductor
Jonathan Sheffer

Music Producers
Matthias Gohl

Electronic Score:
Richard Martinez

Orchestrations
Robert Elhai

Elliot Goldenthal
David John Olsen

Music Supervisors
Jolene Cherry

Leslie Reed
Supervising Music Editor

Christopher Brooks
Music Editors

Zig Gron
Joe E. Rand

Songs/Music Extracts
"Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me, Kill Me"

by Bono, U2, performed
by U2; "Kiss From a Rose"

by Seal; "Smash It Up" by Chris

Millar, Raymond Burns,
Dave Vanian, Alasdair

Ward, performed
by The Offspring;

"Bad Days" by Coyne,
Ivins, Drozd, Jones,

performed by The
Flaming Lips; "Where

Are You Now?" by
Lenny Kravitz,

performed by Brandy
Sound Design

Lance Brown
Frank Knies

Roland Thai
Supervising Sound Editors

John Leveque
Bruce Stambler

Supervising Dialogue Editor
Becky Sullivan

Dialogue Editors
Kimberly Lowe Voigt

Sukey Fontelleu
Anthony R. Mich

Supervising ADR Editor
Fred Stafford

Supervising Foley Editor
Shawn Sykora

ADR Editors
Zack Davis

Steven Janisz
Lee Lemont

Foley Editors
Michael Dressel

Gib Jaffe
Jim Likiowski

Steve Richardson
Production Sound Mixers

Peter Hiddall
2nd Unit:

Douglas Axtell
Dolby stereo

consultant:
Douglas Greenfield

Bernard Weiser
Gordon Ecker

Circus Technical Advisor
Bob Yerkes

Project Consultant
Bob Kane

Technical Consultant
Wes Trager

Stunt Co-ordinators
Conrad Palmisano

Jeff Gibson
2nd Unit:

Dick Hancock
Marine Co-ordinator

John 'Moby' Griffin

Cast
Val Kilmer

Batman/Bruce Wayne
Tommy Lee Jones

Harvey Two-Face/
Harvey Dent

Jim Carrey
Riddler/Edward Nygma

Nicole Kidman
Dr Chase Meridian

Chris O'Donnell
Robin/Dick Grayson

Michael Gough
Alfred Pennyworth

Pat Hingle
Commissioner Gordon

Drew Barrymore
Sugar

Debi Mazar
Spice

Elizabeth Sanders
Gossip Gerty

Rene Auberjonois
Dr Burton

Joe Grifasi
Bank Guard

Philip Moon
Jessica Tuck

Newscasters
Dennis Padalino

Crime Boss Moroni
Kimberly Scott

Margaret
Michael Paul Chan

Executive
Jon Favreau

Assistant
Greg Lauren

Aide
Ramsey Ellis

Young Bruce Wayne
Michael Scramton

Thomas Wayne
Eileen Seeley

Martha Wayne
David U. Hodges

Shooter
Jack Betts

Fisherman
Tim Jackson

Municipal Police Guard
Daniel Reichert

Ringmaster
Glory Fioramonti

Mom Grayson
Larry A. Lee

Dad Grayson
Bruce Roberts

Handsome Reporter

George Wallace
Mayor

Bob Zmuda
Electronic Store Owner

Rebecca Budig
Teenage Girl

Don 'The Dragon' Wilson
Gang Leader

Sydney B. Minckler
Teen Gang Member

Maxine Jones
Terry Ellis

Cindy Herron
Bawn Robinson

Girls on Corner
Gary Kasper

Pilot
Amanda Trees

Paparazzi Reporter
Andrea Fletcher

Reporter
Ria Coyne

Socialite
Jed Curtis

Chubby Businessman
William Mesnik

Bald Guy
Marga Gomez

Journalist
Kelly Vaughn

Showgirl
John Fink

Deputy
Hoby Arden

Marlene Bologna
Banny Castle

Troy S. Wolfe
Trapeze Act

Christopher Caso
Gary Clayton

Oscar Billon
Keith Graham

Kevin Greivoux
Mark A. Hicks

Corey Jacoby
Randy Lamb

Maurice Lamont
Sidney S. Linfau

Brad Martin
Deron McBe

Mario Mugavero
Joey Nelson

Jim Palmer
Robert Pavell

Peewee Piemonte
Peter Radon

Francois Rodrigue
Joe Sabatino

Mike Sabatino
Ofer Samra

Matt Sigloch
Mike Smith

Harvey's Thugs

tbc feet
the minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

Technicolor
Prints by

Technicolor



Benevolent creature: Val Kilmer

criminal psychologist, Dr Chase Meridian, whose main pursuit is Batman. Meridian accompanies Wayne to a glittering circus event. A family of aerialists, the Graysons, are entertaining the crowd when Two-Face arrives, threatening to blow up the circus. Wayne fights the thugs, and the Graysons join in. Two-Face causes three of the Graysons to fall to their deaths. The remaining member, Dick, removes the bomb. He is put under Wayne's guardianship. The young aerialist bonds with Wayne's faithful butler, Alfred, and soon stumbles into the Batcave. After a clandestine spin in the Batmobile, Dick confronts Wayne and insists they become partners. Wayne/Batman refuses.

Nygma assumes a super-criminal identity as the Riddler and approaches Two-Face with a plan to uncover Batman's identity. As E. Nygma, an urbane entrepreneur closely modelled on Wayne, he sells a version of his device to thousands of customers. Among the invited guests at his launch party for the device are Wayne and Meridian. The Riddler's scheme is to submit each guest to his invention and from their brain waves determine who is Batman. Two-Face grows impatient with the scheme, however, and brings in the heavy artillery, only to be scuppered by Batman with Dick's help.

The Riddler figures out that Wayne is Batman. With Two-Face, he invades Wayne's mansion, destroys the Batcave and kidnaps Meridian. Grayson adopts the identity of Robin and Batman agrees that they become partners. The two home in on the villains and save the day.

Director Joel Schumacher - auteur of such disposable classics as *The Lost Boys* and *Flatliners* - doesn't traffic in the same grim whimsy as Tim Burton, the original visionary behind this popular franchise, but when it comes to camp values his *Batman Forever* far exceeds the first and second instalments. It's a fusion of old-school Hollywood spectacles, Kenneth Anger-inflected fetishism, and all the hardware studio money can buy.

A pouty Val Kilmer plays the billionaire depressive who undergoes a radical personality change once he slips on his form-enhancing rubber suit (one version features nipples that virtually snap to attention). Less opaque than Michael Keaton, his predecessor in the

Harvey Two-Face, a former District Attorney, had one side of his face disfigured by a courtroom mishap and blames Batman. Two-Face tosses a security guard out of a skyscraper window in Gotham City, but Batman thwarts this attempt to trap him.

Batman is the alter ego of Bruce Wayne, owner of Wayne Enterprises, which employs a scientist named Edward Nygma. Wayne is approached by Nygma to consider a device that hijacks human brain waves and channels them into the mind of the device's wearer. Wayne rejects the invention as inhumane. Clandestinely, Nygma tests the machine on his reluctant manager and accidentally upends his own sanity. He returns home, a place plastered with photos of Bruce Wayne, and resolves to exact revenge on his former employer.

Wayne meets and falls for a beautiful

role, Kilmer essays a more sensual and benevolent creature of the night, his lips occasionally curling into an actual smile. Yet, although more accessible, Kilmer's Batman is no more distinct a character. He is still closer to a smudged sketch than bone and gristle.

This decidedly prettier Batman is in keeping with a general mellowing. The second movie, – directed, like the first, by Burton – frightened away profitable product tie-in deals; somehow the whip-wielding Catwoman, psychotic Penguin, and too dark knight didn't fit tidily enough on hamburger wrappers. Enter Schumacher, a talent for hire who's never dived too deep, even in his Dystopia Lite fantasy of Los Angeles, *Falling Down*. This most unlikely of action directors (best remembered for his great witty scripts for *Car Wash* and *D.C. Cab*) steers the third Batman movie into safer, more lucrative waters. Yet he's also engineered the most gaudily camp spectacle to hit screens since *Wigstock: The Movie*.

Crammed with provocative quips and not-so-double entendres, *Batman Forever* proves how mainstream camp has become – so much so that most critics have side-stepped the issue. Maybe it's because the camp impulse has been so fully absorbed into the popular stream? Why else ignore the wisecrack about biker bars? Or the Riddler's fixation on Bruce Wayne? Or the outrageous attention to male genitalia both in costume and visual cues? When Robin first emerges in his vermilion costume, Batman not only gives him a studied looking-over, he stops to fix his gaze on his comrade's bright red package.

Given that in *Batman Forever*, the text is all about subtext, it's no surprise that no real story emerges. Batman chases Two-Face, the Riddler chases Batman, Dr Meridian chases Bruce Wayne, and so on. It's all a lot of bat-and-mouse. While tangy repartee helps to fill the cavernous void, it's really too bad that Schumacher has no feel for action. The post-production design is fabulous – neon greens and fuchsia push through the shadows, the costumes wouldn't look out of place at a Vegas cotillion, and the Riddler's secret weapon looks exactly like an enormous Deco blender – but Schumacher's *mise en scène* is as cluttered as a rummage sale, his direction as inert as a panel strip.

The one intriguing narrative glimmer in *Batman Forever* is how certain male power brokers lead very divided lives, squiring beautiful women in public (Nicole Kidman as Dr Meridian) while in private they swing with the boys – in this case a surprisingly game Chris O'Donnell as Robin, a turbo-charged Jim Carrey as the Riddler, and Tommy Lee Jones doing yet another of his psychotics. Although Jones' Two-Face is the only character whose two-dimensionality is telegraphed by his name (and his neatly cleaved face), he's not the only one endowed with a split personality. It's no wonder. After all, the story of the double life is one that Hollywood knows full well, on screen and off, confidentially or not.

Manohla Dargis

Burnt by the Sun (Utomlennye solntsem/Soleil trompeur)

Country: Russia/France

Director: Nikita Mikhalkov

Certificate

15

Distributor

Guild

Production Companies

Studio Trite

(Russia)/Camera

One (France)

With the participation

of The Russian Ministry

for Cinema

Russkii Klub

Canal +

Executive Producers

Leonid Vereshchagin

Jean-Louis Piel

Vladimir Sedov

Producers

Nikita Mikhalkov

Michel Seydoux

Co-producers

Nicole Cann

Jean-Louis Piel

Vladimir Sedov

Line Producer

Leonid Vereshchagin

Production Co-ordinator

Anatolii Ermilov

Production Managers

Paris:

Armand Barbault

Moscow:

Vladimir Ninov

Nizhnii Novgorod:

Vladimir Denisov

Post-production Supervisor

Evgenii Golynsky

Post-production Co-ordinator

Kirill Minkovetsky

Assistant Director

Vladimir Krasinsky

Casting

Tamara Odintsova

Screenplay

Nikita Mikhalkov

Rustam Ibragimbekov

Based on an original

story by

Nikita Mikhalkov

Dialogue

Rustam Ibragimbekov

Nikita Mikhalkov

Director of Photography

Vilen Kaliuta

Camera Operators

Viktor Lysak

Pavel Nebera

Eduard Gimpel

Editor

Enzo Meniconi

Art Directors

Vladimir Aronin

Aleksandr Samulekin

Costume Design

Natalia Ivanova

Make-up

Larisa Avdiushko

Music

Eduard Artemiev

Music Performed by

The State Cinema

Symphony Orchestra of

Russia

Instrumental Quartet:

Mark Simkin

Efim Vyshkin

Aleksandr Bashkatov

Viktor Agapov

Music Conductor

Sergei Skripka

Music Editor

Minna Blank

Music Co-ordinator

Nadezhda Andreeva

Music Extracts from work

by

Dmitrii Shostakovich

Isaak Dunaevsky

Aleksandr Tsfasman

V. Trofimov

S. Dezhkin

Iurii Khaik

Sound

Jean Umansky

André Rigaut

Sound Mixers

Vincent Arnardi

Thierry Lebon

Cast

Nikita Mikhalkov

Sergei Petrovich Kotov

Oleg Menshikov

Dmitrii

Ingeborga Dapkunaite

Marusia

Nadia Mikhalkova

Nadia

André Umansky

Philippe

Vladimir Tikhonov

Vsevolod

Konstantinovich

Svetlana Kriuchkova

Mokhova

Vladimir Ilyin

Kirik

Alla Kazanskaia

Lidiia Stepanovna

Nina Arkhipova

Elena Mikhailovna

Avangard Leontiev

Driver

Inna Ulianova

Olga Nikolaevna

Liubov Rudneva

Liuba

Vladimir Riazov

NKVD Officer

Vladimir Belousov

Aleksei Pokatkov

NKVD Men

Evgenii Mironov

Lieutenant

12,124 feet

134 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Subtitles

● A hot summer in the Russian countryside, 1936. Comrade Kotov, renowned Soviet military hero, is relaxing in the bath house with his young wife, Marusia, and his six-year old daughter, Nadia. A farmer disturbs him, begging him to come quickly to the wheat fields. Russian tanks have turned up, seemingly under orders to

destroy the peasants' harvest. Kotov intervenes. The soldiers defer to his authority and withdraw.

An eccentric old man turns up at the Kotovs' country house. The family are at first alarmed, but soon realise this is Dmitrii, Marusia's childhood sweetheart, in outlandish disguise. He had vanished ten years earlier in mysterious circumstances, and Marusia, heartbroken, had attempted suicide. The family now give him a warm welcome. Only Kotov is suspicious.

Later that day, while bathing at a nearby river, Dmitrii manages to waylay Marusia. It seems he is keen to rekindle their old romance. Kotov, who has taken Nadia out in a rowing boat, arrives back at the shore and sees that they, and everybody else, have disappeared. Jealous, he doesn't realise they've all been press ganged into taking part in an exercise to test the efficiency of gas masks.

At the house, Dmitrii is playing the piano and entertaining everyone with his clowning. He tells Nadia a sad, allegorical story which is clearly about himself and why he had to leave. Kotov and Marusia argue, but are reconciled, and end up making love. Kotov tells Marusia that Dmitrii is a coward.

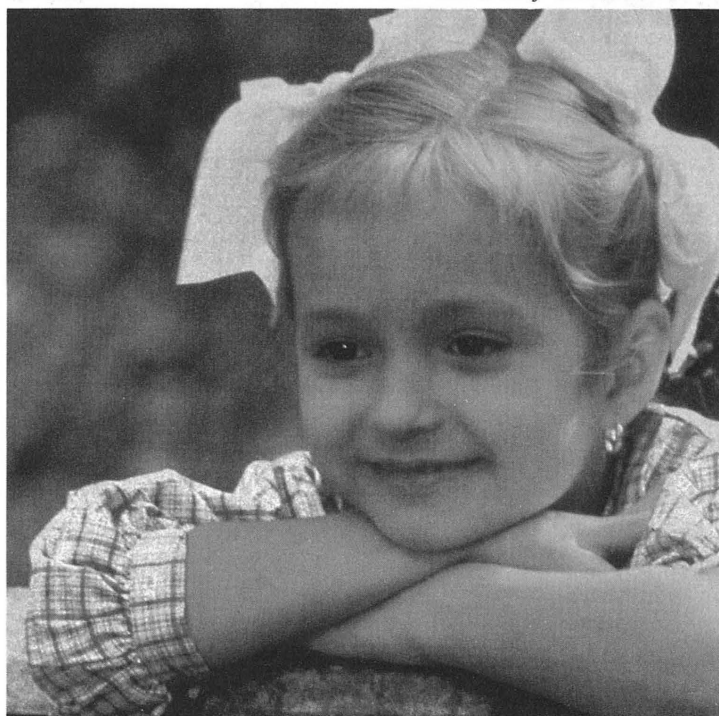
Dmitrii finally reveals the reason for his visit to Kotov. He is a former White Russian, now working for the Secret Police. Kotov is to be arrested and taken to Moscow. That evening, a car draws up with three heavies inside. Kotov goes willingly, sure that he will be able to iron matters out. He hasn't told his family why he is making the trip. It's only when he argues with one of the heavies and is brutally beaten up that he realises how serious his predicament is. Captions reveal that he was tried as a traitor and executed, and that his reputation was 'rehabilitated' posthumously in the 1950s. Dmitrii is shown lying in his bath, having slit his wrists.

● *Burnt by the Sun* is set, very specifically, in the mid 1930s, in the Russia of the show trials and of Stalin's reign of political terror. Mikhalkov opens the film in predictably stark fashion: a young man (later we learn it is Dmitrii, the White Russian coerced into working for the Secret Police) empties his pistol of all but one of the bullets, and prepares to play Russian roulette.

But the world the director proceeds to evoke is as far removed from the conventional Stalinist landscape as it is possible to imagine. Action is set in the countryside. Characters dress in white jackets and blazers, dance impromptu can-cans, eat fulsome lunches, and lounge by the river. Uncle Joe is far away, although we're reminded of him by photographs, uniforms and absurd balloon displays in his honour. This may be the era of Proletkult and Socialist Realism, but that doesn't stop the sun from shining and families from going about their business in the ways they always did. Changes in routine at the dacha are often only cosmetic: for instance, Comrade Kotov and his household no longer play croquet or tennis in the afternoon (bourgeois games) but have turned to football instead. In every other particular, this could be the countryside idealised by Turgenev or Chekhov.

"It's the aroma, the taste of life that has vanished for good," one of the Kotovs' elderly relatives observes in a fit of reactionary pique when he realises that he's about to be forced to take part in a ridiculous exercise to test gas masks. His complaints are belied by the timeless beauty of the landscapes. The wheat fields, skies, forests and rivers create a mood of such universal benevolence it seems unthinkable that any harm can befall the characters.

Mikhalkov has described the film as, "The tragedy of a man blinded by the sun." In an early scene, Comrade ►



Winning smile: Nadia Mikhalkov

◀ Sergei Petrovich Kotov (played with swaggering braggadocio by the director himself) shoos off the Red Army tanks which have turned up to destroy the peasants' wheat fields. There's a deceptive sense that all that is needed to keep political reality at bay is bluster and optimism. But gradually, as the narrative unfolds, it becomes apparent that this particular country house idyll is never quite as innocent as it seems. Sinister little motifs hint at its darker underside. These range from the trivial (a green shard of broken glass beside the river which one or other of the barefoot characters will inevitably end up standing on) to the apocalyptic: fireballs flash across the screen at regular intervals, as if intimating disasters to come.

The plot, at first, seems to hinge on a love affair which may or may not be rekindled. Marusia, Kotov's beautiful young wife, meets up again with her sweetheart from a decade before. It's a stock 'romantic triangle,' with the older husband jealous of his handsome young rival, Dmitrii, suspicious of his wife, and unsure what passed between them all those years ago. Even on this familiar level, the film is beautifully handled. Marusia's confused emotions are hinted at by telling cutaways which show her fingers distractedly tapping a tea-cup or picture her pouring herself a glass of water and failing to notice that it is already overflowing. Kotov's insecurity is signalled by the way he hangs back at the edge of the room or retires on his own to the lunch table when Dmitrii takes centre stage with his clowning.

Mikhalkov's screenplay offers four very different perspectives on the same events. Nadia, the six-year-old child, is trusting and ingenuous, and utterly oblivious to the conspiracies going on around her. Marusia, likewise, seems unaware of the real reason for Dmitrii's visit. It is kept as a secret between him and Kotov. They alone know that the dacha is not the self-enclosed, charmed little world it appears: their lives have all been moulded in one way or another by social and political necessity. The film ends on a shockingly brutal note, with the spectre of Stalin finally unleashed. (To celebrate the latest of the great dictator's triumphs, workers deep in the woods have built a balloon to raise his image high in the sky. A huge poster of his face looks out over the sun-drenched countryside as the film's final tragic twist takes place.)

Burnt by the Sun, garlanded at the Oscars and at last year's Cannes Festival, manages the unlikely feat of combining warm-hearted, summer-in-the-country style romantic comedy with stark insights into how the Stalin Terror disfigured relationships and destroyed families. Mikhalkov refuses to judge his characters or the system which formed them: he neither waxes nostalgic for some long lost, pre-revolutionary Arcadia or lapses into crude polemic about the 'evils' of the Soviet state, and his film is all the richer for it.

Geoffrey Macnab

Butterfly Kiss

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Michael Winterbottom

Certificate

18

Distributor

Electric Pictures

Production Companies

British Screen

The Merseyside Film

Production Fund

present

A Dan Films Ltd

Production

Producer

Julie Baines

Associate Producer

Sarah Daniel

Location Manager

Jonathan Wicks

Assistant Directors

Terry Bamber

Bill Thompson

David Pearson

Screenplay

Frank Cottrell Boyce

From an idea by Frank

Cottrell Boyce, Michael

Winterbottom

Script Supervisor

Sue Jones

Director of Photography

Seamus McGarvey

Steadicam Operator

Nigel Kinton

Opticals

G.S.E.

Editor

Trevor Waite

Art Director

Rupert Miles

Costume Design

Rachael Fleming

Make-up/Hair Design

Maureen McGill

Additional:

David Canales

Music

John Harle

Music Performed By

Solo Saxophonist:

John Harle

Solo Voice & Rebec:

Lucie Skeaping

Percussion:

Paul Clarvis

Keyboards/

Programming:

Alistair Gavin

Music Consultant

Steve Lindsey

Songs/Music Extracts

"Walkin' Back To

Happiness" by John

Schroeder, Mike

Hawker, performed

by Helen Shapiro;

"I Will Survive" by

Frederick Perren, Dino

Fekaris, performed by

Gloria Gaynor;

"Ridiculous Thoughts",

"I Don't Need" by

Dolores O'Riordan,

Noel Hogan, "Away",

"No Need To Argue",

by Dolores O'Riordan,

performed by The

Cranberries; "You

Won't Find Another

Foot Like Me" by

Geoff Stephens, Tony

Macaulay, performed

by The New Seekers;

"Silly Games" by Diana

Bovell, John Myatt,

performed by Janet

Kay; "Leavin' On Your

Mind" by Wayne P.

Walker, Webb Pierce,

performed by Patsy

Cline; "Trouble" by

Conall Fitzpatrick,

Caroline Askew,

Jacqueline Blake,

performed by

Shampoo; "There's

More To Life Than

This" by Björk

Gudmundsdottir,

Nellee Hooper,

performed by Björk;

"Stay" by Jean Guio,

Siobhan Fahey,

Marcella Levy,

performed by

Shakespeares Sister;

"Missed" by and

performed by

P. J. Harvey; "Jewel"

by Marcella Levy,

performed by Marcella

Detroit; "World in

Motion" by Stephen

Morris, Peter Hook,

Gillian Gilbert,

Bernard Sumner,

Keith Allen, performed

by New Order

Dubbing Editors

Rupert Miles

Sarah Rains

Tina Hetherington

Sound Recordists

Ronald Bailey

Additional:

Adam Peacock

Gavin Le Mare

Dubbing Mixer

David Old

Sound Transfers

Hackenbacker

Foley

Dianne Greaves

Jason Swanscott

Jack Stew

ADR

Sound Design

Cast

Amanda Plummer

Eunice

Kathy Jameson

Wendy

Saskia Reeves

Miriam

Des McAleer

Eric McDermott

Lisa Jane Riley

Danielle

Freda Dowie

Elsie

Paula Tilbrook

Ella

Fine Time Fontayne

Tony

Elizabeth McGrath

Waitress

Joanne Cook

Angela

Shirley Vaughan

Waitress

Paul Bown

Gary

Emily Aston

Katie

Ricky Tomlinson

Robert

Katy Murphy

Judith

Adele Lawson

Wife

Jeffrey Longmore

Husband

Suzi Yannis

Motel Receptionist

Julie Walker

Shop Assistant

Kelly

Kelly

7,905 feet

88 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour/Black and White

England, the present. Interviewed by the authorities, Miriam, a young shop assistant, recounts the past few days' events...

Eunice, a young itinerant, drifts along the motorways of the North of England, visiting service station shops in search of a friend, Judith. In Miriam's shop, she threatens to set herself alight and Miriam offers her some sympathy. Eunice shows her letters from Judith; they chat and end up kissing. Miriam takes Eunice to her home where she lives with her disabled mother. That night, Eunice reveals her bruised body, wrapped in heavy chains, and She and Miriam make love.

The following day, Eunice continues her obsessive search and hitches a lift with a truck driver. Miriam tries to find her. Eunice has sex with the trucker and later, when Miriam catches up with her, she is driving the truck. In the back of it, Miriam discovers the trucker's decapitated body; she offers to help Eunice bury him. They drive to some isolated woods where Eunice abandons Miriam with the corpse. At another service station, she chats up a waitress, Angela. Later, she returns to pick up Miriam and they drive to a beach where Miriam declares her love for Eunice and tells her she wants to help her to be a better person.

They pick up a father and daughter who are hitch-hiking to the local Camelot theme park. Miriam begins to get a little nervous about what Eunice might do, especially when she finds Angela's body in the boot of the car. At Camelot, the two women lose the father and return to the car. When Miriam realises that Eunice has kidnapped the little girl, she makes Eunice stop the car lets the girl out. At another service station, Eunice chats up a lorry-driver and suggests he has sex with a reluctant Miriam. He agrees and Eunice murders him in the act.

They drive his lorry to another stop where Eunice harasses a shop assistant called Judith. Outside, Miriam bumps into a travelling salesman that she knows, Mr McDermott. He gives the girls a lift and when Eunice suggests to him that they could all have sex, he checks them into a local motel. Miriam goes to buy some food and comes back to find Eunice and McDermott having frantic sex in the shower. Miriam beats McDermott to death. Eunice now confides to Miriam that she wants to die and asks Miriam to kill her. They drive to the sea where they spend their last night together. As the sun rises, Miriam drowns her lover.

In director Michael Winterbottom and writer Frank Cottrell Boyce's searing film, one delicate butterfly kiss brings about chaos. *Butterfly Kiss* is the third film this year to feature a pair of murderous young women (the others being *Heavenly Creatures* and *Fun*), and its grim mood borders on apocalyptic despair. For these film-makers the wild daughters of Thelma and Louise seem to be symbolising the ultimate in transgression as they revolt against what is expected of their

'nature'. It is as if to say: "What is the world coming to if girls go about killing?" Yet, with its reference to the Old Testament Judith - who decapitated Holofernes, the leader of an army threatening her town - *Butterfly Kiss* makes plain the age-old monstrous potential of the feminine, and follows in the tradition that sees women as outsiders anyway.

In an extraordinary performance, that seethes with a spiky, volatile energy that equals that of David Thewlis in *Naked*, Amanda Plummer is a terrifying Eunice. In her chains a gaunt and messianic figure, she is a walking symbol of a masochistic suffering which she also takes pleasure in. At the same time, Eunice's manacles allude to the fact that she is trapped in a culture which it has become her quest to demolish. No less brilliant in the less flamboyant role is Saskia Reeves as the softly spoken and doe-like Miriam. She remains the questioning voice in the film even after she has gone awry by killing the salesman whom she describes as a "pervert". She believes to the end that she can redeem her loved one. The final bizarre baptism suggests her task is done. At that point, various moral universes collide, as the film-makers strive for a mythical dimension with this story of two unlikely paired angels of destruction on the road.

On a local level, the film's endless patrolling of the North of England motorways, with their grimy Happy Eater cafes, motels and service stations and their racks of middle-of-the-road music, provides a bleak vision, seedily but nonetheless evocatively photographed by Seamus McGarvey. This is a film that takes delight in the small details of modern English life. Miriam reads *The Puzzler*, wears anoraks and home knitted cardies. Her home life in a council block where she looks after her sick mother testifies to a social isolation that seems peculiar to this country. It seems no coincidence that, in the video interview sequences interspersed throughout the film in which Miriam provides her commentary on the events, she has the hollow-eyed look of this country's most notorious female serial killer, Myra Hindley.

All of this places the film in a very British context. At the same time it is one that, in its shop concession environments and in the Camelot theme park, is also blandly Americanised. (Along with Björk and the Cranberries on the soundtrack, the perky English popster Helen Shapiro belting out 'Walkin' Back to Happiness' is matched by Patsy Cline's plaintive 'Leavin' On Your Mind', as if to play on the different emotional chords of the two countries). As in many an American rocky road movie - from *Detour* to *The Hitcher* - the motorway in *Butterfly Kiss* is a conduit for destructive forces. In this instance, it is Britain's own 'white trash', the drifting flotsam that has been outcast by society, that coalesces with an extraordinary impact in a film of numbing power.

Lizzie Francke

Casper

USA 1995

Director: Brad Silberling

Certificate

PG

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Amblin Entertainment
In association with The
Harvey Entertainment
Company

Executive Producers

Steven Spielberg
Gerald R. Molen
Jeffrey A. Montgomery

Producer

Colin Wilson

Co-producers

Jeffrey Franklin
Steve Waterman

Associate Producer

Paul Deason

Production Supervisor

Steven R. Molen

Production Office

Co-ordinator

Angela Heald

Unit Production Manager

Paul Deason

Location Manager

Allen Tinkley

Maine Location

Co-ordinator

William Dunn

Post-production

Co-ordinator

Robert L. West

Assistant Directors

Steve Andrews
Michele Panelli-Venetis
Pamela Cederquist

Casting

Nancy Naylor
Associates:
Debbie DeRango

Screenplay

Sherri Stoner
Deanna Oliver
Based on the character
"Casper The Friendly
Ghost" created by
Joseph Oriolo in the
story by Joseph Oriolo,
Seymour Reit

Script Supervisors

Annette
Haywood-Carter

Director of Photography

Anna Maria Quintana

Additional Photography

Dean Cundey
Kenneth Zunder

2nd Unit Director

of Photography

Ray Stella

Camera Operators

Ray Stella
Casey Hotchkiss

Digital Character

Co-supervisors

Dennis Muren

Stefan Fangmeier

Digital Effects Producer

Janet Healy

Digital Characters/

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light
& Magic

ILM Senior Staff:

Tom Williams

Jeff Mann

Patricia Blau

Jim Morris

Visual Effects Plate

Supervisor

Scott Farrar

Supervising Digital

Effects Artists

Kevin Rafferty

Thomas L. Hutchinson

John Andrew

Berton Jnr

Henry La Bounta

Joe Letteri

Animation Directors

Eric Armstrong
Phil Nibbelink

Supervising Character

Animators

Mark Anthony Austin

Tom "Two Hands"

Bertino

Miguel A. Fuentes

Jeffrey B. Light

Doug Smith

James R. Tooley

Character Animators

Philip Edward Alexy

David Roched Andrews

Chris Armstrong

Rich Arons

Linda Bel

David Byers Brown

Susan Campbell

Jerry Yu Ching

Bruce Dahl

Lou Dellarosa

Bill Fletcher

Paul J. Griffin

Steve Fireplug Hunter

Daniel Jeannette

Ken Satchel King

Peter Lepeniotis

Fabio Lignini

Maryann Malcomb

Phil Robinson

Erik Chr. Schmidt

Trish Schutz

Andrea Simonti

Oskar Urretabizkaia

Jeffrey J. Varab

Colin White

Character Design

Supervisor

David Carson

Digital Character Modeling

Supervisors

Kyle Odermatt

Wade Howie

Digital Effects Artists

Mike Amron

Barry Armour

Lara Cody

Michael Bauer

Marc A. Cooper

Mitch "Johnny CG"

Deoudes

Gerald Gutschmidt

Roger Guyett

Christophe Hery

Greg NeyHi Killmaster

Russell Koonce

Robert Marinic

Stuart T. Maschwitz

Erik Mattson

Michael McNeill

Curt L. Miyashiro

Kenneth J. Nielsen

Tony Plett

Ben Snow

Lisa Suzuki

Tim Waddy

Digital Modelers

Matthew Hendershot

Bruce Buckley

Paul Theren

Jiggle Software

Development

Michael Dean Ludlam

Enveloping Supervisor

Amelia Chenoweth

Digital Paint & Roto

Supervisor

Sandy Houston

Digital Paint & Roto Artists

Donna Ashley Beard

David Deuber

Loring Doyle

Bridget Maria

Goodman

Drew Klausner

Marshall Richard

Krasser

Kevin Willmering

3D Camera Matchmove

Supervisor

Jeff Doran

3D Camera Matchmove

Artists

Jon Alexander

Lanny Cermak

Terry Chostner

Selwyn Eddy III

James Hagedorn

Dave Hanks

Keith Johnson

Digital Texturing

Paint Artist

Susan Ross

Digital Character

Co-ordinators

Vicki L. Engel

Michael J. Halsted

Plate Photography

Co-ordinator

Penny Runge

Visual Effects Art Director

TyRuben Ellingson

Colour Timing Supervisor

Kenneth Smith

Visual Effects Editor

Michael Gleason

CG Software Supervisor

Eric Enderton

Motion Capture Supervisor

Lincoln Hu

Motion Capture Operator

Carl Miller

Motion Capture Artist

Greta Rose Bart

Character Sculptor

Richard Miller

Digital Matte Artist

Eric Chauvin

Scanning Supervisor

Joshua Pines

Scanning Operators

Randall K. Bean

Mike Ellis

George Gambetta

John Whisnant

Digital Continuity Editor

Kerie Kimbrell

Digital Frame Touch-Up

Susan Goldsmith

Heidi Zabit

Line-up

James Lim

Tim Geideman

CG Staff

Gail Currey

John Ellis

Paul Grimshaw

Doug Kay

Ken Maruyama

Editor

Michael Kahn

Production Designer

Leslie Dilley

Art Directors

Ed Verreaux

Daniel Maltese

Set Design

Antoinette J. Gordon

Gary A. Lee

Josh Lusby

Gene Nollmann

Set Decorator

Rosemary Brandenburg

Set Dressers

Jim Meehan

Jonathan Bobbitt

Edward J. Protiva

Erik Ramirez

Production Illustrators

David Lowery

Sherman Labby

Len Morganti

Peter Ramsey

Jacques Rey

Dan Sweetman

Storyboard Artist

George Hull

Sculptures

Yarek Alfer

Thomas Meikle

Thomas Prossner

Special Effects Supervisor

Michael Lantieri

Special Effects

Foremen:

Donald R. Elliott

Tom Pahk

Craig Barnett

Steven Bunyea

Randy Cabral

Cory Faucher

Erik Haraldsted

Louie Lantieri

Matthew J. McDonnell

Tim Moran

Dan Ossello

Jon Porter

William Shourt

Brian Tipton

Lex Webb

Costume Design

Rosanna Norton

Costume Supervisor

Eric H. Sandberg

Key Make-up

Christina Smith

Key Hairstylist

Judy Cory

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

James Horner

Orchestrations

Greig McRitchie

Don Davis

Art Kempel

James Horner

Supervising Music Editor

Jim Henrikson

Musical Editor

Joe E. Rand

Songs/Music Extracts

"Casper The Friendly

◀ *Casper's* suburbia is now the focus of American nostalgia for a supposedly more morally upright era which nurtured optimism and innocence. It's a mood which this film version half-heartedly tries to recreate by making Casper a simpering animated balloon-head too cute even for *Happy Days* and through its nudgingly-titled setting, Friendship, Maine. The film's plot, however, seems to accept that recreating post-war innocence is impossible, and substitutes instead a modern parable of irresolvable grief that bubbles beneath the hysteria of the slapstick humour and the special effects.

In his longing for his dead wife, Amelia, Dr Harvey seeks out representatives of the Afterlife. Those he finds – Casper's mischievous uncles Stretch, Stinkie and Fatso – soon become the reprobate male boozing companions he might have been given in a less supernaturally-bent film. His rootless recent life with his daughter, Kat, in which she was moved from school to school, provides them with the motivation that justifies their move into Whipstaff Manor: Kat's need for friendship and a home. Although Dr Harvey is eventually granted his wished-for audience with Amelia's ghost, seeing Kat through adolescence never seems like a convincing consolation for Amelia's absence. He remains a doleful single parent, with ghosts his only trusted companions.

At first, Casper, the benign bump, is like the imaginary friends that many younger children create for themselves, an unpredictable and exasperating companion. Soon, however, he is an adolescent boy-substitute, who turns winsome flesh for a last waltz with Kat before permanent wispieness engulfs him. It's a transformation that crosses the line between two potential audiences – children and adolescents – (both of which the film wants to appeal to) and demonstrates the identity crisis besetting so many films that might or might not be for either audience.

Thus Casper has to be everything for Kat, from silly putty pal to candy floss lover, because this rather bleak film leaves her with nothing else. Having reconciled the ghosts of Whipstaff to human company, Kat and her father can have the children from Kat's school in for a party. But the schoolchildren's only function is to act as cheerleaders for the young love between Kat and Casper until the moment when Casper reverts to insubstantiality and clears the room with a "Boo". Kat, like her father, is left in a remote home with only tame ghosts for company, while the tame ghost of pleasant suburbia recedes back down the hill with the other children. Kat may have found the permanent friend and home which she desired but her and her father's bereavement remains a solid reality compared to the chimaera of community. Against this sombre psychological backdrop, the frantic antics of Casper and his uncles to amuse and annoy are neither sufficiently sinister nor cheering enough to stand out.

Nick James

Congo

USA 1995

Director: Frank Marshall

Certificate

12

Distributor

UIP

Production Company

Paramount Pictures presents

A Kennedy/Marshall production

Executive Producer

Frank Yablans

Producers

Kathleen Kennedy

Sam Mercer

Associate Producers

Michael Backes

Paul Deason

Production Supervisors

Angela Heald

Costa Rica:

Sergio Miranda

Production Co-ordinator

Joseph 'J.M.' Kelly

Costa Rica:

Lizzy Fallas

Unit Production Manager

Paul Deason

Location Managers

Paul Pav

Africa:

Robin K. Hollister

Location Co-ordinator

Africa:

Jenny Pont

Post-production Supervisor

Kathleen Jo

Stude-Elliott

Post-production Co-ordinator

Sean T. Stratton

2nd Unit Directors

M. James Arnett

Stan Winston

Aerial Unit Director

Mikael Salamon

Africa Unit Director

Simon Trevor

Assistant Directors

Katterli Frauenfelder

Mark Cotone

Laura Nisbet

Aerial Unit:

Ian Woolf

Tom C. Peitzman

Costa Rica:

Marcos Miranda

Casting

Mike Fenton

Allison Cowitt

ADR Voice:

L.A. Mad Dogs

Screenplay

John Patrick Shanley

Based on the novel

by Michael Crichton

Continuity

Africa:

Lissa Ruben

Script Supervisor

Sioux Richards

Director of Photography

Allen Daviau

Additional Photography

Tom Connole

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Charles Minsky

Africa Unit:

Simon Trevor

Camera Operators

Paul Babin

P. Scott Sakamoto

2nd Unit:

Horace Jordan

Kristin R. Glover

Aerial Unit:

Phil Pastuhov

Africa Unit:

Jamie Harcourt

Steadicam Operator

Stephen Campanelli

Effects Production Supervisor

Tom C. Peitzman

Visual Effects Supervisor

Scott Farrar

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light

& Magic

Producer:

Ned Gorman

Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Sandra Ford Karpman

Art Director:

Claudia Mullaly

Digital Matte

Supervisor:

Paul Huston

Editor:

Michael McGovern

Model Shop Project

Supervisor:

Lorne Peterson

Plate Camera Operator:

Patrick Turner

Miniature Lava

Photographer:

John V. Fante

Camera Operator:

Marty Rosenberg

Digital Scanning

Supervisor:

Joshua Pines

Digital Timing

Supervisor:

Kenneth Smith

Stage Effects

Co-ordinator:

David S. Dranitske

Co-ordinators:

Heather A. Smith

Tina Gonzales

Chief Model Makers-

Miniatures Unit:

Howie Weed

Randy Ottenberg

Michael P. Lynch

Eben Stromquist

Charlie Bailey

Giovanni Donovan

John Goodson

Barbara Affonso

Computer Graphics

Artists:

Karen Ansel

Greg Maloney

Barbara Brennan

Tom Martinek

Bruce Buckley

George Murphy

Don Butler

Eddie Pasquarello

Jeff Doran

Chris Townsend

Raul Essig

Dennis Turner

Bijan Foruntanpour

Andy White

Digital Matte Painters:

Yusei Useugi

Bill Mather

Sabre Composition

Artist:

Sheena Duggal

Digital Rotoscope

& Paint:

Julie Neary

Alia Agha

Betsy Cox

Carol Hayden

Susan Kelly

Jodie Maier

Senior Scanner

Operators:

Randall K. Bean

George Gambetta

Plate Photography

Co-ordinator:

Carol Lee Griswold

ILM Model Department

Manager:

Jeff Olson

ILM Stage Department

Manager:

Pat Fitzsimmons

CG Production

Operations Manager:

Gail Curry

ILM Senior Staff:

Patricia Blau

Jeff Mann

Jim Morris

Tom Williams

Additional Special Visual Effects

Buena Vista Visual

Effects

Producer:

Lydia Bottegoni

Digital Compositors:

Kevin Koneval

Dorne Huebler

Bruce Taucher

Digital Artist:

Elissa Bello

Editor:

Juliette Yager

Display Graphic

Banned From The

Ranch Entertainment

Supervisors:

Casey Cannon

Van Ling

Computer Sync:

Josh Kirschenbaum

Stan Winston Studio

Supervisors:

John Rosencrant

Shane Mahan

Concept Artists:

Miles Teves

Mark "Crash" McCreery

Christopher Swift

"Amy" Key Artist:

Miles Teves

Bill Basso

"Amy" Mechanical

Design

Richard Joseph Landon

Jon Dawe

"Grey Gorillas"

Key Artists:

Christopher Swift

Joey Orsco

Greg Figiel

Bill Basso

Paul Mejias

David Grasso

Miles Teves

"Grey Gorillas"

Mechanical Design:

Christian Cowan

Rich Haugen

Alfred Sousa

"Silverback" Key Artist:

Joey Orsco

"Silverback"

Mechanical Design:

J. Alan Scott

Key Artists:

Joey Orsco

Joseph Reader

John Rosengrant

"Hippo" Mechanical

Design:

Tim Nordella

"Hippo" Key Artists:

Mark Jurinko

Ken Brilliant

Richard Davison

Ian Stevenson

Electronics Design:

Emery Brown

Glenn Derry

Rodrick Khachatoorian

Art Department:

Kevin McTurk

Kevin Hudson

Monty Shook

Scott Stoddard

Werner Keppler

Mike Harper

Jon Neill

Christian Lau

Lou Diaz

David Monzingo

Jason Matthews

Jim Charnatz

Hair Department

Supervisor:

Stuart Artingstall

Suit Fabrication

Supervisors:

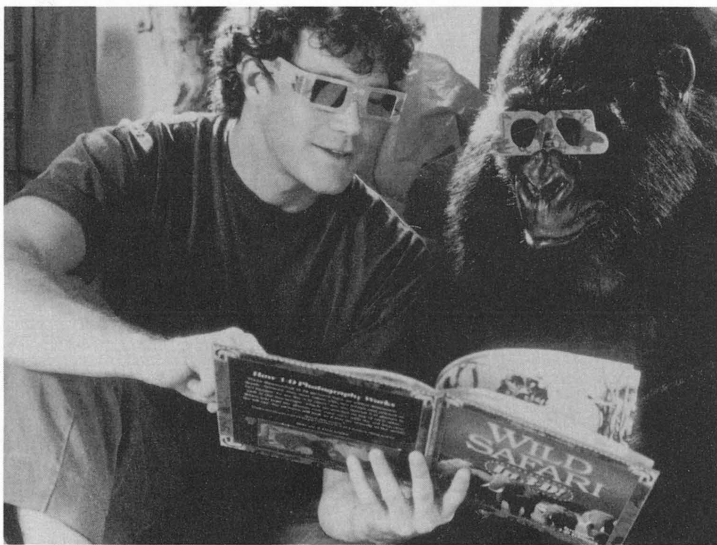
Karen Mason

Colleen Henry

Production

Co-ordinator:

Tara Crocitto



Ape crusader: Dylan Walsh

and find out what happened.

At Berkeley, primatologist Peter Elliot publicly displays Amy, a young mountain gorilla he has taught to 'speak' via signing technology. In the audience is Herkimer Homolka, a mysterious Romanian who offers to finance Peter's expedition to return Amy to her own kind, in the hope she can teach them human speech. At the airport, Karen manages to gatecrash Peter's group by coming up with ample funds when Homolka's credit gives out.

The party arrives in the Congo to find a civil war in progress. With the help of their guide, Monroe Kelly, and bribes handed out by Karen, they negotiate roadblocks and escape military detention before boarding a plane for the Zairean border. The plane is shot down by rockets, but everyone parachutes to safety and the expedition continues on foot. Approaching the Burunzu region whence Charles Travis last transmitted, they are guided by members of the Uzumi tribe to Bob Driscoll, sole survivor of Travis' expedition, who dies of fear at the sight of Amy.

The safari reaches Mt Mukenko where they find the ruins of the lost city of Zinj, fabled source of King Solomon's diamonds, which Homolka has long been seeking. But the mines prove to be guarded by lethal grey gorillas, specially bred for savagery by Solomon's guards. Homolka, avidly gathering gems, is killed by the gorillas and the others retreat into the mines where soon only Karen, Peter and Monroe survive. Peter, about to be killed by the gorillas, is saved by Amy. As the volcano erupts the four make their escape, but Amy elects to stay with a family of normal gorillas. Karen contacts R. B. Travis, but realising he cares only for the diamond and not for his son, uses the laser to destroy his satellite. Peter, Karen and Monroe leave on a hot-air balloon previously sent by Travis, and Karen throws the blue diamond away.

Ex Africa semper aliquid novi, remarked Pliny; there's always something new coming out of Africa. He might have changed his mind if he'd seen *Congo*. Killer apes, lost cities in the jungle, military uprisings, for-

eign-accented diamond-hunters, volcanoes, witch doctors — Frank Marshall's film recycles almost every corny cliché of African-adventure movies from the past 60 years, even daring to rope in that haggard old standby, King Solomon's Mines. Several elements seem to have strayed in from Marshall's previous films: the plane-crash/survival story from the Andean cannibal film *Alive* and the fated jungle expedition that likewise opened *Arachnophobia*. *Congo* comes closer to the latter film in its candidly far-fetched plot, but totally misses *Arachnophobia*'s tension or its malicious wit.

In its favour, though, it also lacks the heavy-handed didacticism of recent Crichton-based films with their solemn warnings against genetic meddling, Japanese expansionism or sexual PC. If the original novel (which I've not read) contained a moral, it certainly hasn't survived the transition to screen. Just as well, really, since anything as substantial as an idea would have looked sadly out of place in such a shamelessly inane confection. *Congo*, indeed, is several decades behind its time: with its cardboard characters, slapdash motivation and one-damn-thing-after-another plot, it should have found its true home chopped into 12 episodes and spread across Saturday matinees.

The usual jibe with a film like this is to say the best acting comes from the animatronic animals. In fact the apes are strangely unconvincing, given the involvement of the great effectsmeister Stan Winston, though they're certainly no worse than the nominal leads, Dylan Walsh and Laura Linney. With Joe Don Baker wasted on a role that lets him do nothing but rant, the film is stolen by Ernie Hudson's sardonic guide and an outrageous turn from Tim Curry sporting a 'Romanian' accent which veers wildly from Moscow to Barcelona. And *Congo*, for all its vacuity, does score one cherishable moment. Deep in the heart of the jungle, trying to comfort Amy, Peter starts crooning *California Dreamin'* to her — then looks up in surprise as every member of the safari, American and African alike, word-perfectly joins in.

Phillip Kemp

Die Hard with a Vengeance

USA 1995

Director: John McTiernan

Certificate

tbc

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Cinergi Pictures

Executive Producers

Andrew G. Vajna

Buzz Feitshans

Robert Lawrence

Producers

John McTiernan

Michael Taddos

Co-producer

Carmine Zozzora

Associate Producer

Robert H. Lemer

Production Supervisor

Justin Moritt

Production Co-ordinator

Terry Ladin

Unit Production Managers

George Manasse

Michael Taddos

John Stark

2nd Unit:

Charles Zalben

Location Managers

Pamela Thur

South Carolina:

John Griffin

2nd Unit Director

Terry J. Leonard

Assistant Directors

Carl Goldstein

Joe Burns

Susan Fiore

2nd unit:

T. Sean Ferguson

Casting

Pat McCorkle

Associate:

Barbara Hipkiss

Screenplay

Jonathan Hensleigh

Based on certain

original characters

by Roderick Thorp

Script Supervisors

Robin Squibb

2nd Unit:

B. J. Bjorkman

Director of Photography

Peter Menzies

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Tom Priestley

Visual Effects Photography

John E. Sullivan

Additional:

David Drzewiecki

Camera Operators

Craig Di Bona

Robert Presley

Gary Muller

Motion Control:

Don Canfield

Boyd Wolf

Visual Effects

MASS ILLUSION

Supervisor:

John E. Sullivan

Consultant:

Joel Hynek

Producer:

Diane Pearlman

Live Action Producer:

Nina Sloan

Manager:

Susan MacLeod

Editor:

Jennifer Wollan

Digital Visual Effects:

Supervisor:

Serge Sretschinsky

Animators:

Pam Auditore

Amy G. Davis

Shoshana Fishbein

Art David

Additional Visual Effects

Sony Pictures

Imageworks

Supervisors:

Scott E. Anderson

Ron Brinkmann

Producer:

Julia Rivas

Digital Artists:

Heather Davis

Tim Douglas

Lisa Foster

Steve Kennedy

Scott Kilburn

M. Scott McKee

Kristen D. Trattner

Peter Warner

Co-ordinator:

Margeara Cameron

Editor:

Monica Anderson

Production Supervisor:

Suzanne Pastor

Buena Vista Visual Effects

Producer:

Carolyn Soper

Editor:

Juliette Yager

Supervisor:

Wally Schaab

Digital Compositing:

Winston Quitasol

Digital Matte Work:

Allen Gonzales

Pacific Title Digital

Executive Producer:

Joe Gareri

Digital Effects

Supervisor:

Bill Villarreal

Digital Effects

Producer:

David Sosalla

Digital Effects

Co-ordinators:

Jennifer Scheer

Lisa Kelly

Digital Artists:

Olivier Sarda

Judith Bell

Lisa Yu

Opticals

Pacific Title

Editor

John Wright

Production Designer

Jackson DeGovia

Art Directors

John R. Jensen

Woods Mackintosh

South Carolina:

David Sharp

Set Design

Bob Shaw

Kyung W. Chang

Peter Rogness

Set Decorator

Leslie Bloom

Storyboard Artists

David Cooney

2nd unit:

Warren Drummond

Special Effects

Supervisors:

Richard W. Cross

William H. Schirmer

Co-ordinators:

Phil Cory

Conrad F. Brink

Karyn Huston

Special Effects

Albert Griswold

Richard Cory

Marine Co-ordinator

Gary Cruise

Ray Svedin

Costume Design

Joseph G. Aulisi

Wardrobe Supervisors

Michael Adkins

Robert Musco

Key Make-up

Marilyn Peoples

Key Hairstylist

Verne Caruso

Title Design

Intralink Film Graphic

Design

Nina Saxon Film

Design

Music

Michael Kamen

Music Performed by

Symphony Seattle

Music Supervisors

Barry Levine

Eric Harryman

Supervising Music Editor

Christopher Brooks

Music Editor

Eric Reasoner

Songs/Music Extracts

"Summer in the City"

by Steve Boone,

Mark Sebastian, John

Sebastian, performed

by The Lovin' Spoonful;

"Off Minor" by

and performed

by Thelonus Monk;

"Got it Going On"

by and performed

by Ted Silbert, RIC-

HARD; "The Fat Outro"

by D. Lee, J. Owens,

performed by Extra

Prolific;

"Got it Covered"

by R. Roachford,

L. Maturina, R.

Kirkpatrick, E. Sermon,

performed by Fu-

Schnickens; "Gift

Rapped", "Westwood

on a Friday Night"

by and performed by

Mark Mangini

Sound Design/

Supervising Sound Editor

Mark Mangini

Sound Editors

Michael J. Benavente

Mike Chock

Rick Freeman

Patricio Libenson

Geoffrey Rubay

George Simpson

David Whittaker

ADR Supervisor

Avram Gold

ADR Editor

Andrew Patterson

Foley Editors

Solange S. Schwalbe

Allan Bromberg

Sound Mixer

Dennis Maitland Snr

ADR Mixers

Charleen Richards

Greg Steele

Paul Zydel

Foley Mixer

David Jobe

Sound Recordist

Kim Maitland

Foley Recordist

Don Givens

Music Mixer/Recordists

Steve McLaughlin

Joel Iwataki

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Michael Minkler

Bob Beemer

Daniel Leahy

Dub:

Dory Binyon
Reporter
David Vitt
Kid at Gas Station
John Glenn Hoyt
Bray Poor
David P. Martin
Federal Reserve Guards
Shari-Lyn Safir
Secretary
Ivan Skoric
Villain
Faisal Hassan
FBI Agent
Richard Russell Ramos
FBI Chief
Angela Amato
Shirley J. Hatcher
Cops

Richard V. Allen
Chief Allen
James Patrick Whalen Snr
Fat Larry Lumis
Paul Simon
Man in Precinct
Carl Brewer
Helicopter Villain

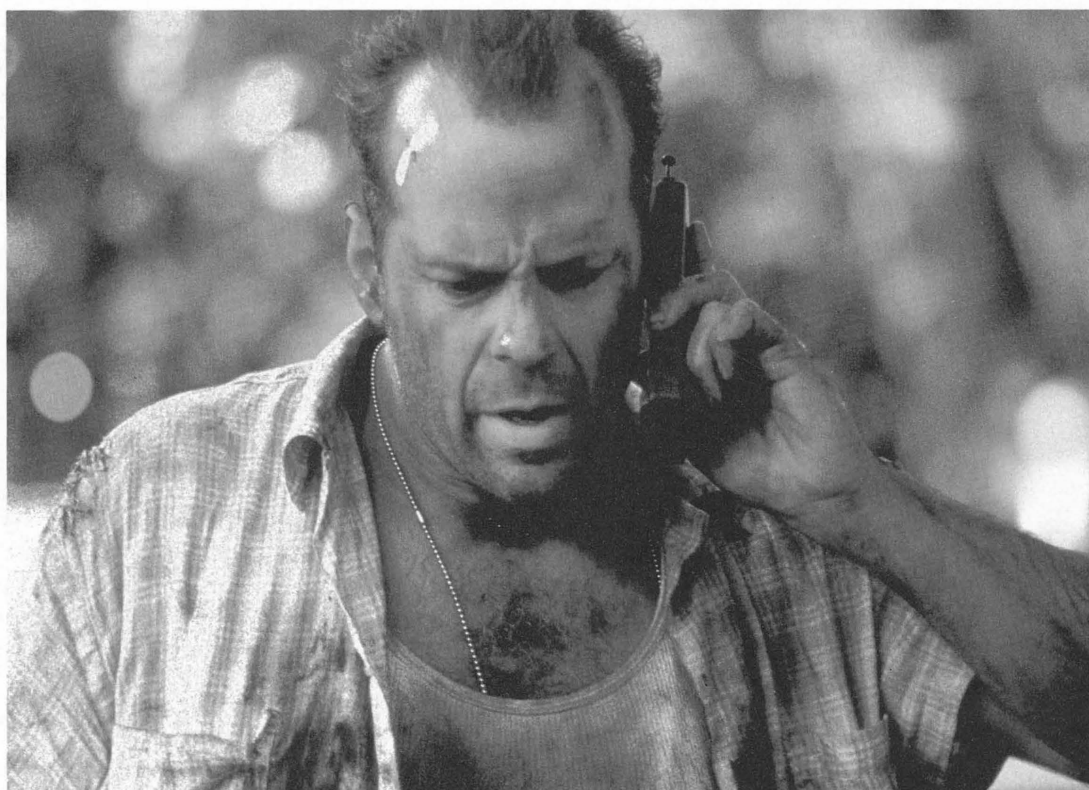
the feet
the minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor
Prints by
DeLuxe
Anamorphic

Summer in New York City. Bonwit Teller's, the department store on 5th Avenue, blows up. The police receive a phone call from someone playing a deadly game of Simon Says. He demands to speak to John McClane. McClane is separated from his wife Holly, on suspension from the police, and hungover. Simon orders McClane to the corner of 138th and Amsterdam or there will be another big bang. In Harlem, Zeus, a proprietor of an electronics store, sees McClane wearing a sandwich-board stating 'I hate niggers'. A gang of black youths is standing nearby. Zeus goes to confront McClane but ends up saving him.

Simon is not happy. He makes Zeus accompany McClane on the next part of the game. They have to answer a phone on 72nd and Broadway or another bomb will blow up. The pair make it only to be given a half hour to answer a phone at the Wall Street Subway station. This occasions a car chase through Central Park. Zeus arrives first but the phone is busy. He harasses a man into hanging up only to have a policeman draw a gun on him. He finally answers the phone but Simon realises that McClane is not there and detonates the bomb. McClane is in the train, finds the bomb in the nick of time and throws it away but the detonation derails the subway car. McClane is then met by government agents who identify Simon as Peter Gruber, whose brother, Hans, McClane threw off a skyscraper in Los Angeles.

Simon tells the police that there is a bomb in one of New York's 446 primary schools that will detonate at 3pm. While the city's resources are channelled into finding the bomb, Simon robs the Federal Reserve Bank of New York of 140 billion dollars in gold. McClane and Zeus figure this out only to arrive after the loot has gone. In pursuit of another riddle, Zeus goes to Yankee Stadium where Simon's assassins decide not to kill him because McClane isn't there. Meanwhile, McClane tracks Simon's truck convoy through the tunnels of an aqueduct. McClane and Zeus reunite on the highway when McClane is spewed out of a water tunnel. They follow the villains on to a ship. Simon captures Zeus and forces McClane's surrender. They are tied to a huge bomb. Back in New York City, the police find the bomb in the school that Zeus' nephews attend. Zeus and McClane extricate themselves and at the Canadian border destroy Simon's helicopter.



Dishing the dirt: Bruce Willis in 'Die Hard with a Vengeance'

The bomb in the school proves fake. John McClane lives to call his wife.

After a touristy montage of New York summer scenes which lasts barely through the credits, *Die Hard with a Vengeance* opens with an unexpectedly prompt bang as Bonwit Teller's blows up. From those first few minutes, the film delivers the delights promised by the big-budget action genre – spectacular stunts, thrilling car chases, big explosions, suspenseful shoot-em-ups – all depicted with the best production values money can buy. There is more of all of this than in any of the previous *Die Hard* films, and most of it is bigger, but not better.

There are several reasons though why *Die Hard with a Vengeance* is a disappointment. The major one is that the film is barely recognisable as a sequel. If the title, the name of the hero and that of the villain were changed, there could be little to connect it to the previous *Die Hard* films. The central concept of these was 'lone cop fighting to free loved ones from an enclosed space in which they are held for ransom by a greedy madman'. Here, however, John McClane has a sidekick, Samuel L. Jackson's Zeus; his loved ones are not in danger (albeit by the end of the film, Zeus' are); and the plot takes us not only through most of New York but also practically into Canada. These changes are fundamental. They don't affect genre expectations but they do deny the audience the pleasures generally expected from sequels.

I miss the recurring supporting cast of the previous two films – William Atherton, Sheila McCarthy and particularly Bonnie Bodelia. This is not only because this hyperactive film could have used the calm and understated emotionality Bodelia brought to the

role of Holly. It was only after watching *Die Hard with a Vengeance* that I realised how important Holly was to the very structure of the films. Her role in the *Die Hard* films is analogous to that of women in the Western. She represents order, stability, family. McClane's attempt to save her is an attempt to overturn the moral and social chaos imposed by the villain. She not only symbolises the utopian value the hero attempts to restore but also provides the moral context for the hero's deriding-do. It is because he fights for her, for what she represents, that he is allowed to kill. Because of her, we are allowed to see McClane express love, anxiety, fear – emotions whose expression is denied the villain. Holly is both the motivation for the hero's extraordinary deeds and the source of the melodrama.

Die Hard with a Vengeance makes no attempt to replace the moral and emotional context for bangs and bloodshed which Holly previously provided. Perhaps this is why it seems such a cynical thrill machine, particularly in light of the Oklahoma bombing – too many deaths and too little emotional residue. The film falls short in other areas as well: the script has as many happy coincidences (McClane being spewed out of the tunnel as Zeus happens to drive past) as plot holes (several aspects of the end are still not clear to me); the editing is often clumsy (the alternation between Zeus and McClane and Zeus' kids at the end); and the extensive use of hand-held camera is an enervating addition to the film's general frenzy. It is as if McTiernan hasn't quite shaken off *The Last Action Hero*. Whenever his direction attempts more, it produces a kind of nervous elephantiasis.

What saves *Die Hard with a Vengeance* from the charmlessness of *Last Action*

Hero is the actors. With the exception of Jeremy Irons – who hasn't quite figured out when to add camp relish to an inflection and when to simply throw a line away – the cast is excellent. Genre is often not considered when evaluating acting. But different genres call for different styles of performance. Action requires actors who can read lines and move their bodies with equal nonchalance and breezy agility. Willis is so superb at this I even forgive him for looking slightly less hunky in his vest than he usually does. The banter between Jackson and Willis, witty exchanges on questions of race and power, is perhaps the best thing about the film.

Good acting however is not essential to action cinema. Good action is. *Die Hard with a Vengeance* delivers more than the bare essentials. The scene where water gets released in the underground tunnel is imaginative and exciting. The revelation of the slogan McClane is wearing in Harlem and the revelation that a man has been chopped in half later in the film both demonstrate visual wit. The stunts throughout are spectacular. Yet the film's pace is too furious. The action scenes don't achieve the effects they should because the director hasn't allowed for the breather necessary to set them up properly. A better pace would have generated a bigger payoff.

Speed, last Summer's hit action film, is a measure of how *Die Hard with a Vengeance* falls short. Jan De Bont, the director of *Speed* and cinematographer of *Die Hard*, seems to have absorbed more from his collaboration with McTiernan on *Die Hard* than McTiernan himself. *Speed* is not only the better action film, it is arguably a better *Die Hard* film than *Die Hard with a Vengeance*.

José Arroyo

Don't Get Me Started

United Kingdom/Germany 1994

Director: Arthur Ellis

Certificate

tbc

Distributor

BFI

Production Company

BFI/TiME

Medienvertriebs

present a

Skyline Film

In association with

Channel 4 TV

Frankfurter

Filmproduktion

With the participation

of Nordrhein-Westfalen

Filmstiftung/

Martest Film

Executive Producers

Ben Gibson

Wolfram Tichy

Producer

Steve Clark-Hall

Executive in Charge of Production

Angela Topping

Co-producer

Michael Smeaton

Line Producer

Heike Richter-Karst

Associate Producer

Beate Balser

Production Executive

Regine Schmid

Production Managers

Anja Giessins

Mairi Bett

Location Manager

Bernd Huckenbeck

Additional Shooting/

Post-production Producers

Paul Cowan

Martin Walsh

Assistant Directors

Gary White

Paul Cowan

Filip Hering

Amanda Posey

Casting

Marilyn Johnstone

Germany:

Clemens Erbach

Screenplay

Arthur Ellis

Script Supervisor

Diane Taylor

Director of Photography

Gil Taylor

Camera Operator

Colin Corby

Opticals

Magic Camera

Company

Editor

Michael Bradsell

Production Designer

Caroline Amies

Art Director

Knut Loewe

Set Dresser

Eliane Huss

Special Effects

Wolfgang Jaeger

Effects Associates

Costume Design

Peri de Braganca

Make-up

Derry Haws

Titles

Optical Partnership

Music

Roger Bolton

Music Performed by

The London Film

Orchestra

Soprano Saxophone:

William Gregory

Guitar:

Chris Coulstone

Choir:

Finchley Children's

Music Group

Music Conductor

Chris Austin

Orchestrations

Chris Austin

Katy Salvidge

Alex Gifford

Music Supervisor

Simon Thomas

Sound Editor

Jim Roddan

Sound Mixer

George Richards

Sound Re-recording Mixers

Otto Snel

Michael A. Carter

Kevin Taylor

Foley Artists

Julie Ankerson

John Fewell

Fight Arranger

Bill Weston

Cast

Trevor Eve

Jack Lane

Steven Waddington

Jerry Hoff

Marion Bailey

Gill Lane

Ralph Brown

Larry Swift

Marcia Warren

Pauline Lewis

Alan David

Barry Lewis

Patrick O'Connell

Joe Kean

Lorna Heilbron

Alice Kaye

Hannah Taylor-Gordon

Cricket

Nathan Grower

Mo

Hilary Sesta

Mrs Baker

Barbara Keogh

Lollipop Lady

Stuart Barron

Barman

Peter Sproule

Vagrant

John Byrne

Boy in Shop

Walter Sparrow

Nurse

Jana Sheldon

Dr Ellie Bluthal

Colin Bruce

Dr Gary Bluthal

Anna Cropper

Mother's Voice

Peter Bayliss

Father's Voice

Sandra Dickinson

Hotline Operator

Natalie Hackner

Young Girl

Cameron Locke

David Larkin

Young Boys

Dean Gaffrey

Schoolboy

Delphine Luchterlonie

Mexican Maid

tbc feet

tbc minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Original Title

Psychotherapy

It has been almost a year since Jack Lane gave up smoking. One night, after a successful interview for a job with an insurance company, he finds his craving has returned. Sitting in his car, he listens to a self-help cassette entitled 'How to Stop Smoking and Start Living'. Later, he drives back to his new home in an immaculate suburb of London and confesses the urge to his wife, Gill.

Jack and Gill have been married for ten months, and each has a child from a previous marriage. Jack's daughter Cricket, Gill's son Mo and the family dog Soldier complete a household run affectionately but strictly. On the first morning of work, Jack nervously practices small talk. Driving the kids to school, he relates how meeting Gill caused him to give up smoking.

Jack discovers that his boss, Joe Kean, and his colleagues, Alice and Larry, are heavy smokers. As he settles into his job, Gill receives a visit from Pauline Lewis, who lives opposite with her husband Barry. Meanwhile, Jack is questioned by Joe about the circumstances of his first wife's death in a house fire. Later, Jack sees Larry talking to a stranger who gestures towards him.

Gill has accepted a dinner invitation at the Lewises for the following evening, but Jack is wary because Barry smokes cigars. He reluctantly consents, and that night smokes a covert cigarette on the back porch. The meal at the Lewises goes smoothly, and Jack resolves to tell Gill all about his past. But in the morning, the stranger who was talking to Larry visits the house, addresses Jack as Peter Neale and gives him a phone number to call. Jack tries ringing from Liverpool Street station, but there's no answer. A vagrant approaches him for a light, and later Jack beats him to death.

Suspicious of Larry, Jack lures him to an unoccupied house and kills him. Jack finally makes contact with the stranger, whose name is Jerry Hoff. Hoff, a private investigator, has figured out that Jack is really Peter Neale, who murdered his wife and her family under the assumed name of Michael Grillo. Jack denies everything, but later trails Hoff to a motel and terrorises him. Hoff confesses that he has sold Jack's story - with a few essential facts missing - to a television show called 'Manhunt', due to be broadcast that night. Hoff tries to stab Jack with a fountain pen, and Jack retaliates by killing him.

'Manhunt' goes out, viewed by Mo and Cricket at the Lewises. Gill waits anxiously for Jack at a restaurant, and at last lights up a cigarette. Jack checks himself into a psychiatric hospital.

Movies used to be wreathed in cigarette smoke as a poetic substitute for sex. When Bette Davis and Paul Henreid lit up at the end of *Now Voyager*, you were made to feel their unconsummated passion; and cigarettes contributed - literally - to the slow-burning atmosphere of many a film noir. Smoking once connoted instant glamour and sophistication, with just a

hint of danger. Now the iconography has changed, and those who still cling to their demonised weeds are driven underground. *Don't Get Me Started* ought to satisfy that persecuted minority at least, since it identifies cigarettes with ordinary, flawed humanity and shows how bottled-up desire can result in murderous rages.

The apparent message of the movie is "Leave us in peace, we smokers", or, as the inscription on Jack Lane's totemic Zippo lighter has it: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Jack's problem is that he buys too much into a culture determined to shave the rough corners off everything - typified here by antiseptic corporate lobbies, manicured suburban lawns and Gill's fanatically neat kitchen. Smoking seems to be a metaphor for the little messes we leave unexamined and smouldering under the pressure of this compulsory psychic hygiene; and Jack's explosions are clearly meant to be read as a projection onto others of his own intolerable sense of imperfection.

All of which makes him a cousin to Jerry Blake, the fastidious mass murderer in Joseph Ruben's *The Stepfather*, who butchered one family after another as each failed to live up to his picture-postcard ideal. Writer-director Arthur Ellis (best known for the documentaries *A Turnip Head's Guide to Alan Parker* and *Chuck Norris - The Man, His Music*) has picked up a few nifties from the Donald E. Westlake script of *The Stepfather* - particularly in the use of dialogue so chirpily banal it becomes creepy ("Honesty is its own insurance," pipes up Jack to his co-workers). But unlike Jerry, Jack isn't an utter Grand Guignol monster viewed exclusively from the outside. Ellis's screenplay tries to convey the anxious, tormented soul ticking alongside the psychopath; and Trevor Eve's expressive face goes hard and glassy or flaccid and uncertain to indicate the different phases of Jack's struggle.

The disadvantage of extending sympathy to the devil is that one misses the obvious release of seeing him blown to smithereens or at least impaled on iron railings. It's rather a letdown when Jack sensibly commits himself for treatment, and the story seems to dwindle into nothing. There are witty touches along the way, including one choice bit in which Jack, cigarette clenched and muttering about health food and free range eggs, cruises the streets like an inverse Travis Bickle. And there's a terrific shock effect when a character gets it full in the face with an ashtray. But for the most part, Ellis (whose debut feature this is) skirts gingerly around the thriller form without ever arriving at its pulpy heart. Ultimately, the movie offers scarcely more than dry conceits and tickling wordplay ("Getting on like a house on fire?"); and its conceptual cleverness begins to suggest a species of repression nearly as unfortunate as its hero's.

Peter Matthews

The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill, But Came Down a Mountain

Director: Christopher Monger

United Kingdom 1995

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Buena Vista

Production Company

Parallax Pictures

Executive Producers

Sally Hibbin

Robert Jones

Bob Weinstein

Harvey Weinstein

Producer

Sarah Curtis

Associate Producer

Paul Sarony

Production Co-ordinator

Hilary Benson

Location Manager

Sally Morgan

Assistant Directors

David Daniels

Stephen Woolfenden

Guy Heeley

Casting

Michelle Guish

Wales:

Sarah Beardsall

Screenplay

Christopher Monger

From a story by

Ifor David Monger,

Ivor Monger

Elmor Day

Director of Photography

Vernon Layton

Camera Operator

David Budd

Steadicam Operator

Jan Pester

Special Opticals

Cine-Site

Editor

David Martin

Production Designer

Charles Garrad

Art Director

Chris Lowe

Storyboard Artist

John Greaves

Garden Design

Mary Norden

Special Effects Supervisor

Mervyn Loyne

Special Effects

First Effects

Special Mountain Building

Jack Jones

Costume Design

Janty Yates

Wardrobe Co-ordinator

John Norster

Make-up Design

Kezia de Winne

Make-up Artist

Joceline Andrews

Titles/Opticals

G.S.E.

Music/Conductor/

Orchestrations

Stephen Endelman

Music Performed by

Male Choral Vocals:

Gwalla Choir

Vocals:

Sian James

Music Arrangements

Jonathon Romeo

William Rimmer

Music Editor

Todd Kasow

Songs

"O Iesu Mawr"

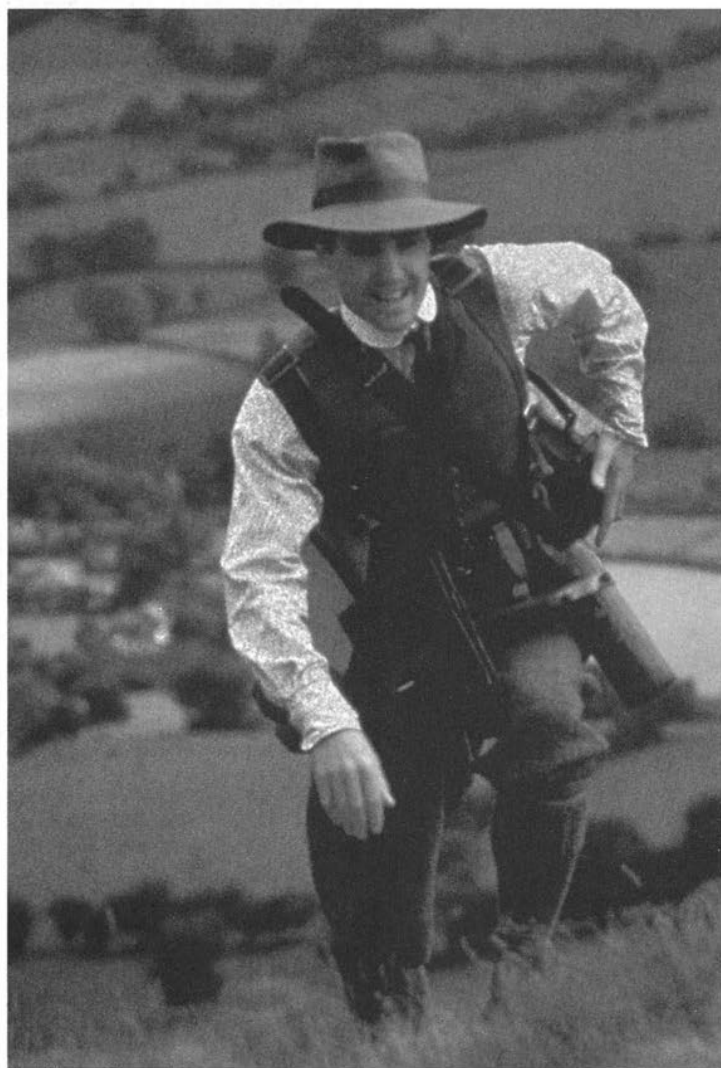
performed by The

Tanat Valley Mixed

Choir; "Men of

Harlech" performed

by The Porthywaen



The hills are alive

◀ the euphemistically-named Morgan the Goat. Only elevations above 1,000 feet qualify as mountains, and according to regional folklore Ffynnon Garw is the first mountain within the Welsh border. Betting on its height intensifies but accurate measurement reveals that Ffynnon Garw is, at 984 feet, only a hill after all. The villagers are devastated.

Reverend Jones calls a meeting at which it is decided to try and add the extra 20 feet to Ffynnon Garw so that it can qualify as a mountain. Various plots are hatched to detain the Englishmen while the work is carried out, including putting sugar in their car's petrol tank, slashing their tyres, and denying that passenger trains run from the railway station. Morgan's ultimate ploy is to summon an old flame, Betty from Cardiff, hoping her feminine wiles will persuade the Englishmen to dally awhile.

A torrential downpour results in further delay but also causes the earthworks to subside. Williams the Petroleum and Johnny Shellshocked – the brother of Blod, another of Morgan's girlfriends – are despatched up the hill with a tarpaulin. Lightning flashes precipitate one of Johnny's seizures. A rift between Morgan and Blod, who is upset by Betty's presence at the pub, ensues. As the rain persists Garrad sinks into a gin-sodden stupor while Anson, reticent at first, grows more

intimate with Betty. On Sunday, after three days of rain, the sun comes out. Morgan attempts to persuade Reverend Jones to sanction work on the Sabbath so the project can be completed. The minister finds his own spiritual justification and exhorts his congregation to labour for Ffynnon Garw. Anson, assisted by Betty, agrees to undertake a new measurement. Applause breaks out as Johnny overcomes his phobias to wheel a barrowful of turf to the summit.

Just before sunset – with work nearing completion – Reverend Jones collapses and dies. His final wish is to be buried on the mountain top. Nevertheless, once the burial is over and the mound finished there is insufficient light for Anson to make an accurate calculation. He and Betty spend the night on the peak, descending next morning to a rapturous village to announce their engagement and a conclusive result – Ffynnon Garw is now officially a mountain.

● Apart from a title of parabolic proportions, *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill, But Came Down a Mountain* – based on a semi-autobiographical story by Christopher Monger, a Welsh director living and working in Los Angeles – is remarkable in terms of its timing. Between Hugh Grant signing into the project and the production

stage of the film came the runaway success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, and subsequently Grant's status has been thrown into doubt by his arrest for "lewd behaviour" in LA. Thus, a film which had become a star vehicle may now be adversely affected.

In a scenario where nationalities, Welsh and English, are pitted against one another in mock antagonism, Grant is cast as the sympathetic Englishman of the title and as a romantic lead who has to be coaxed into intimacy in a village dominated by a red-haired satyr. With his edges nicely blurred, Grant has free rein and an ideal screenplay for turning out a slightly understated reprise of his performance in *Four Weddings*. The whole range of mannerisms is up for grabs: the diffident grimace, the hand brushing aside the lock of hair that flops into the eye, the hint of a stutter. Costume details are strangely distracting in their appropriateness: crisp shirts, warm tweedy breeches with braces, Christopher Robin-like rainwear and galoshes. At one point there's even an elaborate plot device whereby Grant as Anson is compelled to lend Morgan the Goat his last clean shirt so that he can attend chapel with a semblance of respectability. The real reason seems to be to enable Grant to achieve an even softer look by means of a grandad vest at a key stage in his romance with Betty from Cardiff (Tara Fitzgerald, trying to match the stilted animal magnetism of Jennifer Jones in Powell and Pressburger's *Gone To Earth*).

It all adds up to an impression of immense but fragile likeability. At one point Anson reveals to Betty that he, like Johnny Shellshocked, is a casualty of trench trauma, as if there's a need to justify his personality traits. "It's alright," he exclaims, "I'm alright, really I am." We know he is. He epitomises the ideal Englishman, his utter politeness reinforcing a set of certainties which his self-deprecatory manner immaculately undercuts. Like Christopher Monger, who 15 years ago was based firmly within the British independent sector at Chapter Arts Workshop in Cardiff, and whose more recent career has alternated between making films for S4C and Hollywood, *The Englishman* is a hybrid. It deals with a discrete, indigenous community thrown into relief by the incursion of observing outsiders for the benefit of an audience of outsiders.

The Welsh community portrayed here is depicted with a mixture of doughty characterisation (especially in the cases of Kenneth Griffith as Reverend Jones and Colm Meaney as Morgan the Goat) and caricature – take, for example, the obtuse sense of logic behind the naming of names which kicks off the narrative. For all the mythic qualities of Ffynnon Garw, which are well-served by the cinematically stylish use of the mid-Wales landscape, we're placed firmly by the side of the Englishmen, benign onlookers at a whimsical, contained and fairly vapid spectacle.

Jo Cornino

Exit to Eden

USA 1994

Director: Garry Marshall

Certificate

18

Distributor

Guild

Production Company

Savoy Pictures

Executive Producers

Edward K. Milkis

Nick Abdo

Producers

Alexandra Rose

Garry Marshall

Associate Producer

Gary Daigler

Production Co-ordinators

Anna Zappia

2nd Unit:

Kim Nelson-Frey

Unit Production Managers

Gary Daigler

2nd Unit:

Jules Lichtman

Location Managers

New Orleans:

Jimmy Trotter

Peter Wilson

Hawaii:

Randy Spangler

Post-production Supervisor

Judith Blume

2nd Unit Director

Nick Abdo

Assistant Directors

Ellen H. Schwartz

Bettian Fishman

Susan Pickett

Robert Lorenz

Nunzio Fazio

2nd unit:

Jules Lichtman

Tena Yatroousis

Casting

Valorie Massalas

Associate:

Karen Miller

Screenplay

Deborah Amelon

Bob Brunner

Based on the novel

by Anne Rice

Script Supervisor

Carol Depasquale

Director of Photography

Theo Van De Sande

Additional Photography

Johnny Jensen

2nd Unit Directors of Photography

Steve Yaconelli

Michael A. Genne

David Nowell

Camera Operator

Michael A. Genne

2nd Unit:

Tony Rivetti

Digital Effects

Buena Vista

Visual Effects

Dorne Huebler

Editor

David Finfer

Production Designer

Peter Jamison

Art Director

Margie McShirley

Set Design

Steven Schwartz

Darrell J. Wight

Evelyn Barbiere

Ann Harris

Set Decorator

Linda Spheris

Set Dressers

Troy Peters

Ken Wilson

Mark Little

Tom Kalsas

Louis Terry

Jim Jackson

Production Illustrator

Doug Barnard

Special Effects Supervisor

Gary Zink

Costume Design

Ellen Mirojnick

Wardrobe Supervisor

Deborah Hopper

Make-up

Robert J. Mills

Bryan Furer

Hair stylist

Frances Mathias

Titles/Opticals

Pacific Title

Music

Patrick Doyle

Music Conductor

David Snell

Orchestrations

Lawrence Ashmore

Additional:

John Bell

Gavin Greenaway

Music Supervisor

Maggie Rodford

Music Editors

Roy Prendergast

Craig Pettigrew

Scott Grusin

Songs/Music Extracts

"Lift Me Up" by James

Patrick Dunne, Robert

Etolli, performed by

Gene Miller; "Return

to Innocence" by Carly

M.C., "Principles of

Lust" by Michael Cretu,

performed by Enigma;

"Why Can't We Live

Together" by Timmy

Thomas, performed

by James Patrick

Dunne, Robert Etolli;

"Slave to Love" by and

performed by Bryan

Ferry; "Jesus Built

My Hot Rod" by Alien

Jourgensen, Paul

Barker, Bill Riefflin,

Michael Balch, Gibson

Jerome Haynes,

performed by Ministry;

"Uncle Bud Zydeco"

by John Delafosse,

performed by Terrance

Simien; "Nasty" by and

performed by James

Patrick Dunne;

"Pumpin' Jumpin'"

by Stephen Theard,

Derrick Gumbus,

performed by New

World Beat; "Careless

Love" by W. C. Handy,

Spencer Williams,

Martha Koenig,

performed by Dr. John;

"Why" by and

performed by Annie

Lennox; "Please Me"

by James Patrick

Dunne, performed

by Kristina Nichols;

"The Ballad of

Gilligan's Isle" by

George Wyle, Sherwood

Schwartz; "Concerto

No. 3 in F Major

'Autumn', by Antonio

Vivaldi, performed by

The Budapest Strings;

"Concerto for Two

Trumpets" by Antonio

Vivaldi, performed

by Neues Bachisches

Collegium Musicum

Supervising Sound Editor

Alan Robert Murray

Dialogue Supervisor

Michael Magill

Sound Co-supervisor

Gary Krivacek

Dialogue Editors

Lucy Coldsnow-Smith

Richard Burton

Constance A. Kazmer

Kim Secrist

Supervising ADR Editor

Joe Mayer

Foley Supervisor

Scott D. Jackson

ADR Editor

Robert Heffernan

Foley Editor

Pat Bietz

Sound Mixers
Jim Webb
Keith A. Webster
Foley Mixer
Bruce Bell
Sound Re-recordists
Terry Porter
Dave Hudson
Mel Metcalf
Paul Massey
Steve Pederson
Chris David
Don Digirolamo
Sound Effects Editors
Bob O'Brien
Tom Stevens
Samuel C. Crutcher
Milton C. Burrow
Neil Burrow
Foley Artists
Rubber Dubbers
Stunt Co-ordinator
Glenn Wilder
Film Extract
That Touch of Mink (1962)

Cast
Dana Delany
Lisa Emerson
Paul Mercurio
Elliot Slater
Rosie O'Donnell
Detective Sheila
Kingston
Dan Aykroyd
Detective Fred Lavery
Hector Elizondo
Martin Halifax
Stuart Wilson
Omar
Iman
Nina
Sean O'Bryan
Tommy
Stephanie Niznik
Diana
Phil Redrow
Richard
Sandra Kern
Riba
Julie Hughes
Julie
Laurelle Mehus
Heidi
Tom Hines
Nolan
Allison Moir
Kitty
Deborah Pratt
Dr Williams
Laura Harring
M. C. Kindra
James Patrick Stuart
James
Deborah Lacey
Sophia
Lucinda Crosby
Claudia
Janet Turner
Zara
Tom Wrightman
Mike
Joey House
Velvet
Real Andrews
André
Rene Lamart
Roger
Rod Britt
Mr Brady
Rosemary Forsyth
Mrs Brady
Shannon Wilcox
Mary
Diane Frazen
Bettann
Marvin Braverman
Stanley
Leslie Sank
Evelyn
Barbara Marshall
Shy Student
Diana Kent
Tehani
Bud Markowitz
Ben-Wa Juggler
Nancy Debease
Nancy
Lynda Goodfriend
Linda

John Clayton Schafer
Lars
Tanya Reid
Naomi
Pola Malones
Angela
Rachel Levy
Christine
Emily Smith
Durelle
James Currier
Dominick
Sam Benoff
Confused Golfer
Arnold Margolin
Mr Vanderway
Kristi Noel
Fantasy Secretary
Alex Rose
Hostess
Stephen Perkins
Danya
Drummers
Jane Morris
All Tied-up Shop Clerk
Kathleen Marshall
Stewardess Susan
Julie Paris
Immigration Security
Steve Restivo
Immigration Clerk
Ira D. Glick
Immigration Passenger
Joe Torry
Baggage Cop
Ronny Hallin
Airport Cleaning Lady
Frank Campanella
Wheelchair Walker
Mel Novak
Walker's Henchman
Lou Evans
Rio Hackford
Topless Customers
Allan Kent
Detective Anderson
Dawn Lovett
Officer Martha
Mariana Morgan
Rachel
Judith Baldwin
Priscilla
Dr Joyce Brothers
Herself
Julia Hunter
Tour Guide
Scott Marshall
Lette
Donna Dixon
Fred's Ex-wife
Elsie Sniffin
Policewoman
Ed Cree
Street Fiddler
Lisa Lalou
Street Girl
Ralph Martin
Hotel Manager
Sheila Hanahan
Fan Girl
Lori Marshall
Bill Fricker
Tourists
Zachary Bogatz
Brother
Mandy Ingber
Sister
Cassandra Leigh
Unhappy Wife
Bonnie Aarons
Prostitute
Rajia Baroudi
French Maid
Brian Davila
Young Elliot
Gloria Hyllton
Angry Girlfriend
Patrick Collins
Priest
Don Hood
Lisa's Father
John Schneider
Professor Collins
10,250 feet
114 minutes
Dolby stereo
In colour
Technicolor

successful photojournalist in California, he wants to get to the bottom of his peculiar need. He signs up for Club Eden, a tropical island dedicated to S&M role-play, as a slave.

Before going, however, he photographs a master diamond smuggler, Omar, in the act of pocketing contraband. As LA police detectives Sheila Kingston and Fred Lavery soon discover, there is no other picture of Omar in existence. They reason correctly that Omar and his sadistic henchwoman Nina must be keen to get back the film. Both parties are therefore after Elliot. At the island, Elliot's cockiness incurs the wrath of Club Eden's boss, Mistress Lisa. Omar, Nina and Sheila fly in disguised as guests while Fred goes undercover as a maintenance man. Elliot continues to be bare-faced in his admiration of Lisa. She decides to take him in hand personally, tying him up and spanking him with a hair brush until he confesses that he likes it. Afterwards, she allows him to sleep on the floor next to her bed, and in the night he pleases her.

Detective Sheila constantly requests the presence of Slave Elliot. He finally arrives on sports day but confesses that he wants to go immediately to take part in the rollerblade race because the prize is a night with Lisa. He wins and Lisa realises that she loves him and that he has become a threat to her job. She orders him off the island but instead he persuades her to come away with him for a weekend in New Orleans. Sheila and Fred arrest Nina, but Omar gets away and goes after Elliot. Omar tracks the lovers down to Tara, the mansion house from *Gone with the Wind*, where they have slipped away from a guided tour to make love in the bedroom. There Omar tries to shoot Elliot but is prevented by Sheila and shot by Fred. Lisa abandons Elliot and returns to her island but Sheila brings him back to Club Eden and he proposes marriage to Lisa while strung up in bondage.

Whatever the merits of the Anne Rice novel from which *Exit to Eden* was adapted, none can have survived here. This film is a barren concoction: like a Carry On film (*Carry On Cuffing?*) but with the toned-down fantasies of Hollywood executives replacing the picture postcard vulgarity of prurient Brits and with *double entendres* conspicu-

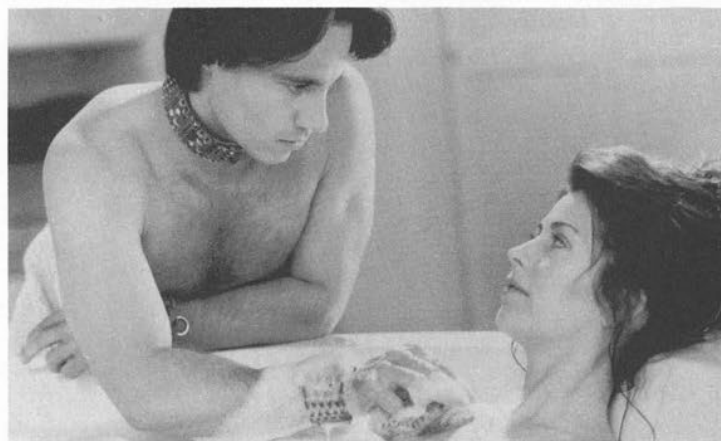
ous by their absence. The script's purpose seems to be to deflect attention away from the sex and punishment theme and towards S&M psychobabble. Mistress Lisa boasts of having put many people in touch with their true selves. There are encounter groups where nice middle-aged women are encouraged to talk dirty: "Put your thing in my thing," ventures one.

Most of the comic lines are given to Rosie O'Donnell. She tries for the come-hither tone of a Mae West, but sounds more like she's speaking a foreign language - scriptese rather than prickease. No one pays her any mind except for her allotted slave (who asks her to name her fantasy. "Paint my house," she replies). Apart from the cops, everyone else is dressed for a raunchy party that never takes place. The most painful act between consenting adults shown is a gentle spanking with a hairbrush. If the point was to send up the ludicrous appearance of fetishistic gear then why be so po-faced about those who wear it? There is plenty of substance for satire in the average fetish manual but *Exit to Eden* doesn't seem to want to offend potential users.

Such contradictions find their focus in the performance of Dana Delany as Mistress Lisa. While Lisa is bareback riding about her fantasy island, we are never quite sure whether her constant female companion is more than just a domestic slave. Delany uses this and other ambiguities in Lisa's character with a skill that obliterates Paul Mercurio in their scenes together. While he remains a charmless buffoon throughout, Delany is clearly an actress of some talent and there are bizarre echoes here of her performance in Paul Schrader's *Light Sleeper* as the equally hard-to-fathom former lover of drug dealer Willem Dafoe.

But there are also many scenes in which she is ill at ease. Indeed, most of the cast appear to know that they're appearing semi-naked in a major turkey. *Exit to Eden* belies the effectiveness of the sort of talent packaging that Hollywood has gone in for over the past few years. Putting Garry Pretty Woman Marshall with Paul *Strictly Ballroom* Mercurio for an Anne Interview with the Vampire Rice story might be an A-list troilist encounter made in paradise, but the outcome is pure torture.

Nick James



Cold under the collar: Paul Mercurio, Dana Delany

First Knight

USA 1995

Director: Jerry Zucker

Certificate
PG
Distributor
Columbia TriStar
Production Company
Columbia Pictures
A Zuckers Brothers production
Executive Producers
Gil Netter
Eric Rattray
Janet Zucker
Producers
Jerry Zucker
Hunt Lowry
Associate Producer
Kathryn J. McDermott
Supervising Producer
Paul Hitchcock
Production Supervisor
Alexander de Grunwald
Production Co-ordinators
Janine Lodge
Bi Benton
Unit Production Manager
Hunt Lowry
Location Managers
Chris Brock
Wales:
Allan James
2nd Unit Director
Arthur Wooster
Assistant Directors
Chris Carreras
Cliff Lanning
Richard Whelan
Jamie Christopher
Joshua Robertson
2nd unit:
Terry Madden
Mark Layton
Casting

Screenplay
William Nicholson
Story
Lorne Cameron
David Hoselton
William Nicholson
Script Supervisors
Angela Allen
June Randall
2nd Unit:
Caroline Sax
Director of Photography
Adam Greenberg
Camera Operators
Gordon Hayman
Tim Ross
2nd unit:
Martin Hume
Visual Effects Co-ordinator
Dennis Lowe
Digital Effects
Cinesite Digital Film Center
Supervisor:
Gareth Edwards
Producer:
Sharon Lark
Compositor:
Mark Nettleton
Animator:
Bill Scanlon
Digital Effects/Animation
CFX Associates
Craig Zerouni
Chris Briscoe
Additional Digital/Visual Effects
D.Rez Hollywood
Animation Visual Effects
Available Light Ltd
John T. van Vliet
Opticals
Pacific Title
Editor
Walter Murch
Production Designer
John Box
Supervising Art Directors
Bob Laing
Michael White
Art Directors
Stephen Scott
Giles Masters
Set Decorator
Malcolm Stone

Draughtsmen
Edward Ambrose
Jean Peyre
Scenic Artists
Steven Michael
Sally Banks
Storyboard Artists
Martin Asbury
John Rose
Roger Deer
Miniatures
The Magic Model Company
Special Effects Supervisors
John Evans
2nd Unit:
Terry Glass
Costume Design
Nana Cecchi
Armour Maker
Terry English
Production Supervisors
Kenny Crouch
Annie Crawford
Chief Make-up
Supervisor:
Peter Robb-King
Artist:
Jane Royle
Chief Hairstylist
Elaine Short
Title Design
Nina Saxon Film Design
Titles
Cinema Research Corporation
Music/Music Conductor
Jerry Goldsmith
Orchestrations
Alexander Courage
Music Editor
Kenneth J. Hall
Supervising Sound Editor
John Morris
Sound Editors
Michael Magill
Richard Burton
Ian MacGregor-Scott
Cindy Marty
Noah Blough
Alison Fisher
David van Slyke
ADR Supervisor
Kimberly Harris-Rivoli
ADR Editors
Ulrika Akander
Beth Bergeron
Foley Supervisor
Christopher Flick
Sound Mixer
Colin Charles
Music Recordist/Mixer
Bruce Botnick
Sound Re-recording Mixers
Walter Murch
Matthew Iadarola
Gary Gegan
Foley Artists
Alicia Stevenson
John Cucci
Technical Adviser
John Waller
Stunt Co-ordinators
Greg Powell
Dinny Powell
Swordmaster
Bob Anderson
Horsemaster
Steve Dent
Cast
Sean Connery
King Arthur
Richard Gere
Lancelot
Julia Ormond
Lady Guinevere of Leonesse
Ben Cross
Malagant
Liam Cunningham
Sir Agravaine
Christopher Villiers
Sir Kay
Valentine Pelka
Sir Patrice

As a small boy in Australia, Elliot Slater used to deliberately misbehave until his family's French maid would spank him. Now, as a full-grown,

Colin McCormack
Sir Mador
Ralph Ineson
Ralf
John Gielgud
Oswald
Stuart Bunce
Peter
Jane Robbins
Elise
Jean Marie Coffey
Petronella
Paul Kynman
Mark
Tom Lucy
Sir Sagamore
John Blakey
Sir Tor
Robert Gwyn Davin
Sir Gawaine
Sean Blowers
Sir Carados
Alexis Denisof
Sir Gaheris
Daniel Naprous
Sir Amant
Jonathan Cake
Sir Gareth
Paul Bental
Jacob
Jonny Miller
Gauntlet Man
Rose Keegan
Mark's Wife
Mark Ryan
Challenger
Jeffrey Dench
Neville Phillips
Elders

Oliver Lewis
Wolf Christian
Angus Wright
Marauders
Jonathan Jaynes
Eric Stone
Guards
Ryan Todd
Young Lancelot
Albie Woodington
Scout
Richard Claxton
Child
Dido Miles
Grateful Woman
Michael Hodgson
Young Man in Crowd
Susanah Corbett
Young Woman
in Crowd
Susan Breslau
Wedding Guest
Kate Zucker
Flower Girl
Bob Zucker
Little Boy with Birds
Charlotte Zucker
Burt Zucker
Bread Vendors

12,062 feet
134 minutes

Dolby stereo
in colour
Prints by
Technicolor

In Camelot, King Arthur has established a rule of peace and freedom, prompting his former ally Prince Malagant to break away from the Round Table and establish an aggressive dictatorship. Between the lands of Arthur and Malagant lies Leonesse, a small territory ruled by Lady Guinevere and predated upon by Malagant's men. Guinevere contracts a semi-political engagement to Arthur, hoping to bring Leonesse under the protection of Camelot. As she travels to Camelot, her retinue is attacked by Malagant. She is rescued by Lancelot, a wandering swordsman who has reacted to the early loss of his family by swearing to love no land nor person. Later, Lancelot impulsively runs a gauntlet to win a kiss from Guinevere but refuses to collect, having promised not to kiss her until she asks him.

Malagant proposes to Arthur that Leonesse be divided between their kingdoms and, when Arthur refuses, kidnaps Guinevere. Lancelot rescues her and they confess their love for each other but realise their duty to the ideal of Camelot comes first. Arthur makes Lancelot a knight and then marries Guinevere. They help the people of Leonesse resist Malagant's invasion. Lancelot and Guinevere surrender to their feelings and kiss only to be discovered by a jealous Arthur. The King puts the lovers on public trial, an event which is interrupted by Malagant's attack on Camelot. Rather than yield, Arthur calls for his people to resist and is shot down by archers. Lancelot rallies and kills Malagant, driving off his armies. Arthur dies, passing their ideal of Camelot to Lancelot and Guinevere.

In its rigorous exclusion of the magical from the matter of mythical Britain, *First Knight* – a punning title that conceals a stodgy solemnity – is almost on a par with Robert Bres-

son's *Lancelot du Lac*: no Excalibur, no Merlin, no Grail, no Morgana, no Green Knight, no Lady in the Lake, no Morgdred, no sword in the stone, no Parsifal, no *quondam rexque futurus*. Set in some a-historical Neverland with football, crossbows, Christianity, theme park rides and padded/studded armour that looks like the biker gear of George Romero's *Knightriders*, Jerry Zucker's post-*Ghost* epic trims away the romance and tragedy of the oft-told story. *First Knight* presents a Guinevere who is never an adulteress because she never actually sleeps with Lancelot, a Lancelot torn between his vow of emotional celibacy and the attractions of domesticity as he wields a fast sword like a wandering Western hero, and an Arthur whose declaration that the freedom of Camelot should be extended to all people everywhere sounds uncannily like the basis of America's post-war foreign policy.

It is pointless to lament the absence of much of the most poetical material in the legend and literature of Camelot from a Hollywood Summer blockbuster. After all, when John Boorman tried to cram all of Arthuriana into *Excalibur* he came up with an unwieldy mess shot through with brilliance and fudge – but it is notable that whenever Zucker and his collaborators try to 'improve' on the originals they come up with bathetic sequences that fall especially flat. Arthur dies of a few measly arrow wounds before the big battle and is shoved off into the lake on a burning bier in a Viking funeral. This is by a long sword a trite and unmagical alternative to Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, not to mention Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*, T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*, the musical *Camelot* and even *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. All great stories can be retold in an infinite number of ways, but this one bends only so far. Giving Lancelot and Guinevere a happy and morally pure ending, allowing them to hand the concept of godly monarchical democracy down to posterity, breaks so much that is vital,

moving and important about the Arthur legend that we are left with extras scrapping, baddies leering and lovers simpering out of context.

Sean Connery, silver-grey wig given a fetching Tintin lick, would seem to be an ideal embodiment of King Arthur, and might even have the darkness to make the business about raping his sister and siring his eventual murderer play in Peoria. However, he simply gives another in his lengthening line of non-committal iconic performances, suggesting that he hasn't found a script he cares about in the last decade. Richard Gere's pretty-boy action man Lancelot handles his sword well, despite fight scenes that offer neither adventurous swashbuckling stunts nor grittily medieval violence, but he exhibits no screen chemistry at all, either with the King who is supposed to inspire him to greatness or the Queen (Guinevere graduates from Lady to Queen half-way through) who melts his heart. The lovely Julia Ormond is a spirited gel on horseback, capable of ripping her dress to leave a trail, but otherwise pitches fair to be the Rachel Ward of the 90s, offering smiles and *moues* as required.

Despite the fading male and rising female star power, this is a curiously characterless Round Table, with only a tiny and pointless John Gielgud cameo and Ben Cross' scowling villain providing recognisable faces and a curiously listless sense of the epic. Lancelot's rescues and gauntlet-running are Indiana Jones knock-off stunt sequences. The big battle scenes, however, depend on the supposed tactical genius of Arthur or Malagant having blind spots so that a fake camp can be constructed to lure an attack without any of Malagant's sheep-impersonating spies noticing. The villain's entire army creeps up on Camelot also unnoticed for the finale. In each clash of good and evil, one side displays remarkable stupidity in dashing into the field without thinking so that the foeman can inflict bloodless, inoffensive slaughter upon them.

Kim Newman



Palely loitering with intent: Richard Gere

Friday

USA 1995

Director: F. Gary Gray

Certificate

15

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

New Line Productions

In association with

Priority Films

Executive Producers

Ice Cube

Bryan Turner

Co-executive Producer

Helena Echegoyen

Producer

Patricia Charbonnet

Co-producer

W. E. Baker

Associate Producers

Andre Robinson Jr

DJ Pooh

Production Co-ordinator

Jackie Kiang

Location Manager

Kojo Lewis

Unit Production Manager

W. E. Baker

Post-production Supervisor

James Tripp-Haith

Assistant Directors

Dwight Williams

Algric Leo Chaplin

Kimberly J. Sizemore

Casting

Jaki Brown-Karman

Kimberly Hardin

Screenplay

Ice Cube

DJ Pooh

Director of Photography

Gerry Lively

Steadicam Operator

Kurt Gardner

Editor

John Carter

Production Designer

Bruce Bellamy

Set Design

Maria Baker

Set Decorator

Michelle Harding

Hollie

Set Dressers

Thomas J. Martinez

Larry Johnson

Lionel Perezdiz

Nick Sternberg

Neil Bowman

Chris Nembbart

Martell Webster

Darol King

Aaron Daniels

James Bowen Jr

Davor Atles

Eduardo Garcia

Rob Shepps

Ronald Williams

Scenic Artists

Jose Sandoval

Rod Nunnally

Storyboard Artist

Mark Vena

Special Effects

Robert Loftin

Costume Design

Shawn Barton

Wardrobe Supervisor

Paulette Holman

Key Make-up

Rea Ann Silva

Cassi Mari

Key Hair

Roddy Stayton

Title Design

Melissa Limmer

Titles/Opticals

Title House

MUSIC

Hidden Faces

MUSIC PERFORMED BY

Phenixx Horns Esq.

Iki Levi

Simon Franglen

Lui Lui Satterfield

Chuck Wild

Ross Bolton

David Valencia

Willie Green Jr

David Tobocman

Music Producer/Supervisor

Frank Fitzpatrick

Horn Arrangements

Bobby Bryant

Music Editors

John Thomas

Thom Brennan

Executive Music Consultant

Andrew M. Shack

Songs

"Trying to See Another

Day" by R. Isley, E. Isley,

A. Winbush Isley,

performed by The Isley

Brothers; "Freddie's

Dead", "Little Child

Runnin' Wild" by and

performed by Curtis

Mayfield; "The Way You

Do the Things You Do"

by William "Smokey"

Robinson, Robert

Rogers, performed

by The Temptations;

"Get Up (I Feel Like

Being a Sex Machine)"

by James Brown, Bobby

Byrd, Ronald Lenhoff,

performed by James

Brown; "Hoochie

Mama" by L. Campbell,

D. Hobbs, M. Ross, C.

Wong Won, performed

by 2 Live Crew; "Roll it

Up, Light it Up, Smoke

it Up" by L. Muggerud,

L. Freese, S. Reyes,

performed by Cypress

Hill; "I Heard it

Through the

Grapevine" by Norman

Whitfield, Barrett

Strong, performed

by (1) Gladys Knight

and the Pips, (2) Roger;

"Hittin' Corners"

by K-Dee, Shaquill Tajh-

Allah, performed

by K-Dee; "Control"

by James Harris III,

Terry Lewis;

"Heartbreaker (Part I,

Part II) by Roger

Troutman, Larry

Troutman, performed

by Zapp; "I Wanna Get

Next to You" by

Norman Whitfield,

performed by Rose

Royce; "Lettin' Niggas

Know" by C. Lloyd, M.

Jordan, performed

by Threat; "Superheroes"

by L. Muggerud, J.

Vasquez, R. Medrano,

performed by

Funkdooibest; "Coast II

Coast" by R. Smith, J.

Robinson, E. Brooks,

performed by Tha

Alkaholiks; "Take a Hit"

by D. Rolison,

performed by Mack 10;

"Low Rider" by M.

Dickerson, C. Miller,

S. Allen, H. Brown,

H. Scott, L. Oskar,

L. Jordan, J. Goldstein,

performed by War;

"Keep Their Heads

Ringin'" by Dr. Dre,

Sam Sneed, J-Flex,

performed by Dr. Dre;

"You Got Me Wide

Open" by Ice Cube,

B. Collins, B. Worrell,

performed by Bootsy

Collins, Bernie Worrell;

"Friday Night" by

B. Jordan, B. Ross, J.

Johnson, performed

by Scarface, CJ Mac;

"Mary Jane" by and

performed by Rick

James; "Blast If I Have

To" by S. Adams, M. Ogleton, performed by E-A-Ski; "Friday" by and performed by Ice Cube
Sound Design/Supervising Sound Editor
 Leonard Marcel
Dialogue Editor
 Alan Schultz
ADR Supervisor
 Andrew DeCristofaro
ADR Editors
 Andrew DeCristofaro
 Yuri Reese
Production Sound Mixer
 Robert Davenport
Foley Mixer
 Eric Thompson
ADR Recordist
 Rod O'Brien
Music Recordist/Mixer
 David Tobocman
 Tim Boyle
Sound Re-recording Mixers
 Ken Teaney
 William Fresh
 Tony Sereno
Sound Effects Editor
 Stuv
 Jonathan Karp
Foley Artists
 Greg Barbanell
 Laura Macias
ADR Group Supervisor
 Barbara Harris
Stunt Co-ordinator
 Julius LeFlore

Cast
 Ice Cube
 Craig
 Chris Tucker
 Smokey
 Nia Long
 Debbie
 Tiny 'Zees' Lister Jnr
 Deebo
 John Witherspoon
 Mr Jones
 Anna Maria Horsford
 Mrs Jones

Regina King
 Dana
Paula Jai Parker
 Joi
Faizon Love
 Big Worm
DJ Pooh
 Red
Angela Means
 Felisha
Vickilyn Reynolds
 Joann
Ronn Riser
 Stanley
Kathleen Bradley
 Mrs Parker
Tony Cox
 Mr Parker
Anthony Johnson
 Ezal
Demetrius Navarro
 Hector
Jason Bose Smith
 Lil' Chris
Bernie Mac
 Pastor Clever
Justin Revooner
Meagan Good
 Kids
Lawanda Page
 Old Lady
Terri J. Vaughn
 China
F. Gary Gray
 Black Man at Store
Yvette Wilson
 Rita
William L. Calhoun Jnr
 Shooter
Reynaldo Rey
 Red's Father

8.221 feet
91 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour



Stoop theatre: Chris Tucker, Ice Cube

appears, followed by Debbie's sister who is badly bruised. Debbie yells at Deebo for hitting her sister and when Deebo slaps her, an incensed Craig attacks him. The two men fight and at one point Craig pulls a gun, but his family persuades him to settle the fight without it. Craig finally knocks Deebo out, Smokey takes the \$200 from Deebo's shirt and arranges to pay back Worm. Craig and Debbie make a date for Saturday.

As Republican Party *gauleiters* Bob Dole and Bill Bennett have shown by their recent attacks on Hollywood films and Interscope records, rap and the cinema have a singular place in the middle-American imagination: as bearers of a cultural form of nerve gas. *Friday* is a movie made by rappers, starring one-time gangsta rapper *extra-ordinaire* Ice Cube. Nothing much happens in the film, it doesn't have anything particular to say and such characterisation as there is seems propped up on a zimmer frame of cultural stereotypes. Nonetheless, it is the sort of film that Republican commentators should be watching if they want to know what they're talking about.

Friday roughly approximates what you get if you take the Corner Men from Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* and give them 90 minutes to themselves. A good half of the film is taken up with Ice Cube and Chris Tucker sitting on the porch. They observe cute girls jogging past, a cuckolded husband throwing his wife out onto the street, the next door neighbour's house being robbed. They never go anywhere except for a brief trip to the 'black-owned' grocery store (complete with a Korean counter boy - announced on the soundtrack by a gong). The film is content to describe the hermetic suburban universe that clusters around them.

The plot - such as it is - is pure stoop theatre. Cube and Tucker's dialogue is peppered with African-American suburban myths - the guy who mistook a PCP joint for weed and spent the night

in a chicken coop, the philandering preacher who gets his just desserts and the paranoid girlfriend with five-inch blood-red talons for fingernails and braided hair like Medusa's locks. There's much fooling around and occasional contact with the neighbourhood thug, the local dealer and a stream of friends coming to visit Craig's sister. All the characters are standard models, with some idiosyncracies. On the women's side, for example, you have crusty, foul-tongued old bats going door-to-door for the Jehovah's Witnesses, slutty suburban housewives, tut-tutting wise-ass mummies, pathologically persistent girlfriends, troublesome tramps and tough cuties. One might accuse the film-makers of misogyny - but the male characters are no less cut and dried.

Friday is therefore a comic-strip of a movie, a rogues' gallery of African-American folk figures, each one getting his or her just desserts. Yet it isn't quite a sitcom; more a shaggy dog story told visually out of corner gossip. Perhaps the movie's closest equivalent in form is rap itself. *Friday* was written by two rappers - Ice Cube and DJ Pooh. A former helmsmen of the pioneer gangsta rap groups N.W.A., Ice Cube once argued that rap music doesn't exist to promote or reject, merely to report from the ghetto; to work as a broadcast for a black urban youth locked out of mainstream forms of communication. Equally, this would make a good justification of *Friday*.

Like freestyle rap, the stuff of the movie just pours out. Frequently it makes no sense but it is effortless to digest. Except for the brief climax of the film which advocates beating your opponent senseless rather than using a gun, *Friday* is mostly ephemeral stoopside observation and front porch philosophy. It shows a potted African-American universe with its own urban myths instead of the crack-addled gun-toting woman-beaters of Republican nightmares.

Olly Blackburn

Innocent Lies

United Kingdom/France 1995

Director: Patrick Dewolf

Certificate
 18
Distributor
 PolyGram Filmed Entertainment
Production Companies
 Red Umbrella Films/Septieme production
 In association with Cinea/PolyGram
Producers
 Simon Perry
 Philippe Guez
Associate Producer
 Philippe Carcassonne
Production Co-ordinators
 Deryn Stafford
 Marie McFerran
Location Managers
 Claude Guymont
 Richard Dunmore
Assistant Directors
 Peter Heslop
 Patrick Pinel
 Steve Robinson
Screenplay
 Kerry Crabbe
 Patrick Dewolf
Script Supervisor
 Sam Donovan
Director of Photography
 Patrick Blossier
Editors
 Chris Wimble
 Joelle Hache
Lightworks Editor
 Chris Dickens
Production Designer
 Bernd Lepel
Art Directors
 Nicolas Prier
 Charlie Smith
Set Dresser
 Amanda Grenville
Sculptures
 Yann Haugomat
Digital Special Effects
 The Computer Film Company
Producer:
 Allison O'Brien
Designer:
 Mark Nemes
Costume Design
 Tom Rand
Wardrobe Supervisor
 Patrick Wheatley
Make-up/Hair Design
 Peter King
Make-up/Hair Artists
 Clarisse Domine
 Nuala Conway
Titles/Opticals
 General Screen Enterprises
Music
 Alexandre Desplat
Music Performed by
 Munich Symphony Orchestra
 Soprano Saxophone
 Solo:
 John Harle
 Piano Duet/
 Stride Piano:
 Simon Chamberlain
 Alexandre Desplat
 Solo Piano:
 Leonore Hall

Music Conductor
 Allan Wilson
Orchestrations
 Alexandre Desplat
Songs
 "Que reste-t-il de nos amours?" by Charles Trenet, Chauliac, performed by Charles Trenet; "C'est lui qu' mon coeur a choisi" by Asso, Duard, Ginibrar, performed by Edith Piaf; "La Morocha" by Saborido, Villoldo, performed by Ada Falcon
Sound
 Ivan Sharrock
 Colin Ritchie
 John Hayward
 Robin O'Donoghue
Dialogue Editor
 Harry Barnes
Foley Editor
 Tim Lewiston
Foley Recordist
 Alan Snelling

Cast
 Adrian Dunbar
 Alan Cross
 Florence Hoath
 Angela Cross
 Sophie Aubry
 Solange Montfort
 Joanna Lumley
 Lady Helena Graves
 Gabrielle Anwar
 Celia Graves
 Alexis Denisof
 Christopher Wood
 Stephen Dorff
 Jeremy Graves
 Marianne Denicourt
 Maud Graves
 Melvil Poupaud
 Louis Bernard
 Bernard Haller
 Georges Montfort
 Rosalind Bennett
 Janet Blain
 Keira Knightley
 Young Celia
 Tobias Saunders
 Robin Saunders
 Celia's Brothers
 Charles Duron
 Beach Boy
 Michel Winogradoff
 Albert
 Yvon Back
 Inspector Talmi
 Alexandra Monvoisin
 Zaza
 Marianne Segol
 Gigi
 Tatjana Verdonik
 Maud's Mother
 Oskar Freitag
 Maud's Father
 Alan Ross
 Station Clerk
 Donal McCann
 Joe Green

7.913 feet
88 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

September 1938. British policeman Alan Cross arrives "somewhere on the French coast" following the suicide of a colleague, Joe Green, who was investigating an expatriate English family, the Graveses. Cross visits Lady Helena Graves, who tells him that Green suspected her son Jeremy of murder; she also mentions that Jeremy shot his twin brother dead ▶



Absolutely Franglais: Joanna Lumley

◀ with a bow and arrow when he was a boy. On his way out, Cross meets Jeremy, just arrived from England with his wife, and his sister Celia, who is about to be married to an American. Celia pleads with Cross to stay and unravel the mystery.

Observing the family at a tennis match, Cross is attracted to Celia; in the showers after the match, Jeremy tells him he had nothing to do with the death of Celia's previous fiancé, Alastair, who died in an unexplained car crash days before they were due to marry. Finding a note from Celia in Green's belongings, Cross goes to the Graves' house at night and sees her kissing Jeremy in the greenhouse. Meanwhile Lady Helena has called Scotland Yard complaining about Cross' interference, and the local French police are trying to make him go home. Jeremy is arrested after Lady Helena is found murdered in her bed, strangled with catgut from his tennis racket; but the French police release him when they discover that the catgut would not have been strong enough. At the funeral, Jeremy knocks Cross down. A distraught Celia tells Jeremy she doesn't want him anymore, and in a flashback over the bow-and-arrow incident it turns out that it was she who killed her brother, although Jeremy put her up to it.

Celia visits Cross at his hotel; as they make love, she confesses that she drove Alastair to his death by letting him see her and Jeremy in bed together, and that she helped Jeremy kill Lady Helena, smothering her with a pillow after the catgut broke. She tries to flee the country but is caught by the police. Cross, by now totally smitten, releases her from jail and takes them to the railway station. Instead of getting on the train, she telephones Jeremy; as they have sex in the booking office, he tries to strangle her with a stocking. Cross breaks his way into the office, but he is too late: Celia has stabbed Jeremy with a pair of scissors.

● Before it was called *Innocent Lies* – two of those handy words that desperate film producers throw in the hat along with Lethal, Fatal and True – this was known by the more enticing but scarcely more appropriate title *Halcyon Days*. That's not the only sign of an unhappy post-production: it's hard to imagine the distinguished Irish actor Donal McCann would have been cast as Joe Green if the role had consisted, as it does in this final cut, of a shot of his corpse in the first minute. It's equally strange that a film directed (and co-written) by such an experienced screen-

writer – Patrick Dewolf, best known in Britain for his scripts for Patrice Leconte's *Monsieur Hire* and *Tango* – should have emerged so garbled, and so devoid of narrative drive. With its disjointed succession of scenes, *Innocent Lies* bears the signs of extensive juggling in the editing suite – you keep hoping for a voiceover to explain some of the more baffling plot jumps, but that's one of the few film noir clichés that Dewolf has chosen not to indulge.

The film carries an unusual credit: "The producers gratefully acknowledge the inspiration provided by Agatha Christie for the making of this film, which does not purport to be a faithful adaption [sic] of any of her work." But it's Alfred Hitchcock they should really be thanking: Dewolf throws in irrelevant *homages* to two of his most famous scenes, a tennis match where all the spectators bar one are turning their heads to follow the ball (from *Strangers On A Train*), and a final strangling/scissors-stabbing (straight out of *Dial M For Murder*). Also thrown into the mix are *The Big Sleep* and *Les Enfants terribles*, while the coolly observed mood of romantic obsession and the languorous tracking shots bring to mind *Monsieur Hire*.

The plan, apparently, was some sort of *ménage-à-trois* of English country house mystery, fallible film noir detective and French sexual perversity. But *Innocent Lies* fails on every count. Apart from the frigid Bauhaus architecture of the Graves' family home, little is made of the 1938 setting beyond the odd shot of troops being mobilised and a fleeting reference to Lady Helena's Nazi sympathies. With the leading characters all British, the film could more plausibly have taken place in England – where, for instance, Cross' ability to release Celia from jail wouldn't look quite so unlikely. The real reason for the French location is producer Simon Perry's continuing, and so far unsuccessful, effort to pioneer a distinctively Anglo-French brand of cinema (c.f. *Nanou* and *Hotel Du Paradis*).

It's hard to blame actors when they have to contend with such underwritten roles. But, as Celia, the winsome Gabrielle Anwar never seems capable of inspiring the sort of desperate passion that drives Jeremy and Cross, while Stephen Dorff lacks the sort of Satanic attraction the role of Jeremy needs – although, as in *Backbeat*, his English accent is faultless. Equally out of his depth is Adrian Dunbar as Cross, a detective with no interesting history or foibles – apart from taking his young daughter away with him on a case, which leaves another set of questions unanswered (what does a little English girl get up to alone "somewhere in France" in 1938 while her father's off falling in love with a murderess?). With the rest of the cast wandering around in a daze, the only spark is provided by Joanna Lumley's all-too-brief turn as the wicked Lady Helena, who, in the film's sole moment of humour, orders a bemused Cross to carry her downstairs for no reason at all.

John Wrathall

In the Mouth of Madness

USA 1994

Director: John Carpenter

Certificate

15

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

New Line Cinema

Executive Producer

Michael De Luca

Producer

Sandy King

Executive in charge of Production

Adrianna A. J. Cohen

Associate Producer

Artist Robinson

Production Co-ordinators

Cheryl Miller

Unit Production Manager

John Danyliw

Location Manager

Brian Campbell

Executive in charge of Post-production

Joe Fineman

Post-production Supervisor

Ric Keeley

Assistant Directors

Artist Robinson

Adam Druzman

Stuart Williams

Casting

Back Seat Casting

Associates

Canada:

Ross Clydesdale

Screenplay

Michael De Luca

Script Supervisor

Ben Bhandari

Director of Photography

Gary B. Kibbe

Camera Operators

Judson E. Kehl

Optical

James Lim

Motion Control

Ray Gilbert

Special Visual Effects

Industrial Light & Magic

Supervisor

Bruce Nicholson

Producer

Kim Bromley

Art Director

Mark Moore

Editor

Mary Serafini

Executive in charge of Production

Patricia Blau

Computer Graphics

Supervisor:

Carl N. Frederick

Computer Graphics

Animators:

Euan K. Macdonald

Rob Coleman

Rotoscope Artists

Rebecca A. P. Heskes

Jack Mongovan

Digital Paint Artist

Lisa Drostova

Digital Composer

Mark Holmes

Optical

Supervisor:

Kenneth Smith

Line-up:

Jenifer Lee

Co-ordinator:

Lisa Vaughn

Editor

Edward A. Warschilka

Production Designer

Jeff Steven Ginn

Art Director

Peter Grundy

Set Decorator

Elinor Rose Galbraith

Set Dressers

Peter P. Nicolakakos

Clive Thomasson

Carlos Caneca

Draughtsmen

Stephen M. Berger

William F. O'Brien

Illustrator

Joseph F. Griffith Jr

Scenic Artist

Ian Nemes

Model Makers

Giovanni Donovan

Cloud:

Lorne Peterson

Special Effects

Martin Malivoire

Pictures

Ted Ross

Puppeteers

Tony Chappell

Mark DeLuca

Katy Limmer

Stacy Smith

Costume Design/Supervisors

Robert Bush

Robin Michel Bush

Make-up

Donald J. Mowat

Special Make-up Effects

Robert Kurtzman

Gregory Nicotero

Howard Berger

KNB EFX Group

Hairstylist

James D. Brown

Titles

Title House

Music

John Carpenter

Jim Lang

Song

"We've Only Just

Begun" by Roger Nicols,

Paul Williams

Sound Design

John Pospisil

Supervising Sound Editor

John Dunn

Sound Editors

Donald Flick

Matthew C. May

Dialogue Editors

Stephanie Flack

Howard S. M. Neiman

Supervising ADR Editor

Harry B. Miller

ADR Editor

Andrew G. Patterson

Foley Editor

Rick Mitchell

Sound Mixers

Owen A. Langevin

Ron Bartlett

Re-recording

Robert Thirlwell

Ken Polk

Foley Artists

Sarah Jacobs

Robin Harlin

Stunt Co-ordinator

Jeff Imada

Cast

Sam Neill

John Trent

Jürgen Prochnow

Sutter Cane

Julie Carmen

Linda Styles

Charlton Heston

Jackson Harglow

Frances Bay

Mrs Pickman

Wilhelm von Homburg

Simon

Kevin Rushton

Tony Mack

Guards

Conrad Bergschneider

Axe Maniac

Marvin Scott

Reporter

Katherine Ashby

Receptionist

Ben Gilbert

Young Teen

Dennis O'Connor

Cop

Paul Brogen

Scrawny Teen

Sharon Dyer

Homeless Woman

Sean Ryan

Bicycle Boy

Lance Paton

Little Boy

Jacelyn Holmes

Little Girl

Hayden Christensen

Paperboy

Garry Robbins

Truck Driver

Sean Roberge

Desk Clerk

Robert Lewis Bush

Hotel Man

Louise Beaven

Old Lady

Cliff Woolner

Bus Driver

Deborah Theaker

Municipal Woman

Chuck Campbell

Customer

Carolyn Tweedle

Nurse

Thom Bell

Farmer

Mark Adriaans

Window Teen

Jack Moore-Wickham

Simon's Son, Johnny

David Austerwell

Richard Kohler

Kieran Sells

Laura Schmidt

Kyle Sheehan

Daniel Verhoeven

Kevin Zegers

Katie Zegers

Group of Kids

8,570 feet

95 minutes

Dolby stereo

In colour

Deluxe

Prints by

Filmhouse



Cross dresser: Sam Neill in 'In the Mouth of Madness'

● A man, John Trent, is carried kicking and screaming into a mental hospital and locked in a padded cell, where he draws crosses all over the walls. Interviewed by a senior medic, he tells his story...

An experienced insurance fraud investigator, Trent is being briefed on a new assignment over lunch when he narrowly escapes attack by an axe-wielding maniac. His assignment involves a publishing company who claim their top author, horror writer Sutter Cane, has vanished, leaving his latest novel, *In the Mouth of Madness*, incomplete. Impatient Cane fans are rioting outside bookshops. The head of the company, Jackson Harglow, introduces Trent to Cane's editor, Linda Styles, adding that the axeman, now dead, was Cane's agent.

Suspecting a publicity scam, Trent starts reading Cane's books. They give him weird nightmares, but he deduces that the cover designs make up a coded map of New Hampshire and show the location of Hobbs End, the fictional setting of Cane's last novel. He drives there with Linda, along a route that becomes steadily more outlandish. Hobbs End proves to be exactly as Cane described it, including the Pickman Inn, where Trent and Linda check in, and a huge, forbidding church with Byzantine domes. Villagers with guns attack the church, but Cane appears at the entrance, and the villagers are saved by a pack of mastiffs.

Linda insists they are now living Sutter Cane's new book, but Trent is still sceptical. Visiting the church, Linda finds the author. He shows her his completed novel, which he claims was dictated to him by an alien race who plan, via his writings, to destroy humanity and take over the earth. When Linda returns to the hotel she seems oddly changed. Trent tries to escape with her from the town, where a mob is rioting in the streets, but Linda begins to mutate and each time Trent drives out of the town he finds himself back in it. Finally he crashes, waking up in the church where Cane gives him the finished typescript and points him down a tunnel which returns him to the normal world.

Narrowly escaping the irrupting aliens Trent finds himself near the highway and makes his way to a motel where he burns the typescript. Back in the city Harglow, denying all knowledge of Linda, tells him *In the Mouth of Madness* was published months ago and has now been made into a film. All over the world riots are breaking out, with people mutating or killing each other. Outside a bookshop Trent kills a Cane-reader with an axe, and is committed to an asylum...

Dr Wren leaves Trent in his cell. That night Trent hears screams and sounds of slaughter. The next morning the hospital is wrecked, bloody and deserted. Making his way into the abandoned city, Trent finds a cinema showing the film *In the Mouth of Madness*. As the film we have just seen unrolls on the screen in front of him, he sits shrieking with deranged laughter.

● Even if John Carpenter has yet to recapture the gleeful, buzzsaw energy of his earliest work, several of his subsequent films have come sufficiently within striking distance to keep his admirers hoping for a return to form. *In the Mouth of Madness* isn't that; but it's an accomplished and well put-together piece of work – one that moreover achieves a rare balancing act in parodying the horror genre without sending it up. True, the plot is derivative; but then that's the whole point.

The chief source of the film, as screenwriter Michael De Luca readily admits, is H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos, in which an ancient and loathsome race who preceded us, and whose image survives in our earliest myths and nightmares, waits to repossess the world. The ingenious twist in Carpenter's film is that the channel by which they achieve this is the writings of someone like Lovecraft himself, whose imagination has created the requisite alternative reality, centring on the archetypal spooky New England village of Hobbs End. The process is never made too clear – are the humans being taken over, Body Snatchers-style, by the aliens, or simply being driven to destroy each other? It hardly matters; the film is far more concerned with playing off the different levels of reality, with Sam Neill's cynical investigator first finding himself trapped within the pages of a book he despised, and finally watching himself – as we are – in the film of that same book as apocalypse cracks open around him.

In playing games with genre conventions and competing realities, *In the Mouth of Madness* strays into much the same territory as the recent, unlooked-for turnaround in the Freddy series, *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*. But comparison with Craven's film, which managed to combine post-modern jokiness with genuinely scary moments, shows up the chief weakness of *Madness*: for all its skill and ingenuity, it just isn't very frightening. Rather than screams or shudders, it's more likely to provoke knowing grins from horror aficionados as they check off the references: now a nod to Lovecraft, now a glance at King, now an echo of Carpenter's own work. (Linda's metamorphosis into a scuttling spider-creature with her face on upside-down was done, and better, in *The Thing*.) Other horror-movies are drawn on, too: Hobbs End recalls the Hobbs Lane tube station of *Quatermass and the Pit*, and the intern at Trent's nuthouse is a Dr Sapirstein, like Ralph Bellamy's urbane gynaecologist in *Rosemary's Baby*.

The film is something of a virtuoso performance. But virtuoso technique notoriously precludes much digging into the depths, and Carpenter here rarely touches the emotions his earlier, cruder efforts so readily got to. Lovecraft's writings, at their best, are genuinely disturbing, lingering sombrely in the mind; given such a source, it's disappointing that *In the Mouth of Madness* should provide not much more than a diverting hour-and-a-half.

Philip Kemp

Intimate with a Stranger

United Kingdom 1994

Director: Mel Roberts

Certificate
tbc

Distributor
Independent
International Pictures

Production Company
Independent
International Pictures

Producer
Roderick Mangin-Turner

Line Producer
Deborah Thompson

Associate Producer
Ed Harper

Production Co-ordinator
Michelle Ross Stanton

Production Manager
Stephen Williams

Assistant Directors
Rupert Style

Stuart Powles

Lynda Beckett

Casting
Frances Miller

Screenplay
Mel Woods

Roderick

Mangin-Turner

Script Supervisor
Madeline Buckingham

Director of Photography
Nicholas Tebbet

2nd Unit Director
of Photography

Mike Little

Camera Operator
Ray Andrew

Editor
Brian Smedley-Aston

Production Designer
Graeme Story

Art Director
David Reekie

Costume Supervisor
Tabitha Doyle

Make-up
Michele Baylis

Denise Van Zant

Titles
General Screen

Enterprises

Music

Ledsam & Pugh

Music Performed by

Trumpet:

Ken Rattenbury

Trombone:

Brian Casson

Reeds:

Mike Turner

Chris Aldridge

Sound Editor

Daniele Sordani

Sound Mixers

Barry Reed

Darryl Linkow

Sound Re-recorder

Ernest R. Marsh

Cast

Roderick Mangin-Turner

Jack Hawkins

Daphne Hayer

Michelle

Amy Tolsky

Carol

Lorelei King

Ellen

Ellenor Wilkinson

Vicki

Janis Lee

Summer

Darcey Ferrer

Barbara

Kaethe Chernoy

Colleen Passard

Sara Mason

Francesca Wilde

Women to Camera

Tamsin Hollo

Annette

Gifty Garton

Woman in Bed

John Guerrasio

KLOV Radio DJ

the feet

the minutes

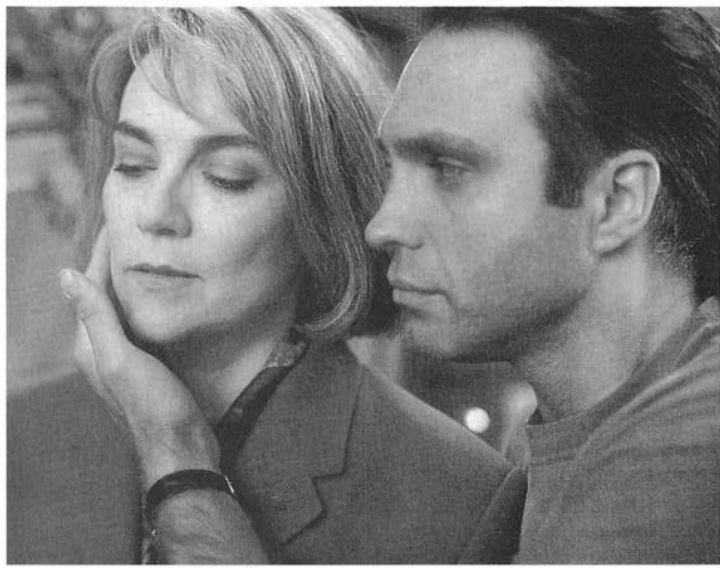
Dolby stereo

In colour

lifestyle he associates with his former girlfriend, Michelle, whose photograph he keeps in his bedside drawer along with the cash he earns from his clients. Their relationship having collapsed some time ago, Michelle unexpectedly calls by and a row ensues. They part acrimoniously. He continues in his work and they meet again, sharing a happy, intimate meal together.

One day, Michelle arrives unexpectedly while one of his clients is still in his bed. Michelle storms out. Ellen, a nervous first-time client, calls. She relates her misgivings about coming to see him which revolve around the tragically early death of her husband. Jack's misgivings about his current profession harden and are further strengthened by an emotionally wearing and potentially dangerous encounter with a client named Vicki, who abuses him and threatens him with a gun. Jack resolves to make a fresh start. Packing up his possessions he tries to call Michelle, but discovers that her line is dead. He drives to the beachfront, locates her, explains his decision and informs her of his new teaching post. He tells her he loves her and they are reunited.

● "You can be intimate with a stranger but a stranger to intimacy," runs one of the smug formulae around which Mel Roberts' film weaves its story of an emotionally damaged ex-philosophy professor, his relationship in tatters, who sets up as a gigolo specialising in stay-at-home making-out. The promise the film holds out of exploring philosophy in the bedroom, linking the carnal and the cerebral, is never developed any further than in providing a 'sensitive guy' veneer to the character of Jack Hawkins. Roderick Mangin-Turner – who also co-wrote and produced the film – is helpfully built like a Chippendale but has less emotional range than the line of furniture of the same name. His good looks seem dredged up from some rock-star gene pool's primordial soup – think Sting meets Michael Hutchence (plus ponytail). The film is really less concerned with offering insights into male ►



Different strokes: Lorelei King, Roderick Mangin-Turner

◀ vanity and the supposedly traditional male ability to disengage emotion from sex, than it is with using Jack as a device for a variety of walk-through cameos of female desire.

As one would expect of a film that's characterisation and tone are inspired in part by *Oprah*-style talking cures and in part by *Cosmo*-confessionals, we have a parade of female types rather than characters: Summer, the teenager who wants to lose her virginity with an experienced older man; Barbara, the slightly jaded woman-of-the-world with a healthy interest in sex toys; Carol, the Jewish housewife, who agonises about her husband, her kids and her cellulite; Ellen, who craves companionship without emotional commitment; Vicki, the 80s career-woman, with neither the time nor the inclination to do anything other than pay for the attentions of someone like Jack. Finally, there's Michelle, the ex-girlfriend who returns to give their relationship a second chance, the breakdown of which Jack uses to justify his dropping-out of academia and turning into Mr Stud-U-Like. That the film's narration does nothing to qualify or even complicate his motivation indicates the depth at which it is happy to operate, while also making it seem a *fait accompli* that the couple will be reunited. Jack's various women thus become little more than a series of cumulatively decisive encounters en route to inevitable reconciliation with Michelle.

From this complacent curvature of plot springs the film's torpid sentimentality: everything works out fine for everyone. One gets the feeling that the slightly risqué element of Jack's sanctioned promiscuity – rendered respectable in the film's terms by the fact that it's just a job – works in a curiously puritanical way to try and mask the saccharine heart of the film. Jack's gigolo act, the film infers, shouldn't be seen as an emotionally-scarred male taking a holiday in misogyny but, rather, as altruism; he's a one-man charity, a fucking therapist. Although, at times, the film clearly wishes to masquerade as an examination of the current state of sexual mores, it has none of the hard-edged introspection that characterises such films as *Carnal Knowledge*, *Looking For Mr. Goodbar*, *American Gigolo* or *Exotica*. *Intimate with a Stranger* is neither erotic nor is it really about sex; it's about the consummation of talk-as-foreplay.

Static staging doesn't help matters – the action rarely leaves Jack's poky boudoir except for some desultory motorbiking around the Los Angeles beachfront, shot with a *Baywatch*-style heat-haze sheen. Nor are matters helped by the often fabulously risible dialogue: "I don't recall sending you an invitation to come back into my life," hisses Jack to Michelle. Without any stand-out performances – the best here being Amy Tolsky's Bette Midler-ish turn as Carol – and lacking visual bravura or any agenda other than sentimentality, *Intimate with a Stranger* is a limp experience.

Chris Darke

Somebody to Love

USA 1994

Director: Alexandre Rockwell

Certificate

18

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

Lumiere Pictures

present an

Initial production

Executive Producer

Jean Cazes

Co-executive Producer

Marie Cantin

Producer

Lila Cazes

Associate Producer

Sergei Bodrov

Production Co-ordinator

Kris Nielsen

Production Manager

Tina Bawner

Location Manager

Scott A. Logan

Assistant Directors

Cas Donovan

Amy Schmidt

Richard Greenberg

Casting

Georgianne Walken

Sheila Jaffe

Screenplay

Sergei Bodrov

Alexandre Rockwell

Script Supervisor

Carol Banker

Director of Photography

Robert Yeoman

Steadicam Operator

Rusty Geller

Editor

Elena Maganini

Production Designer

J. Rae Fox

Art Director

Erik Polczwartek

Set Decorator

Michele Muñoz

Set Dresser

Merry-Beth Noble

Scenic Artists

Lisa Keller

Paul Davis

Bernard Grisez

Leesa Martling

Gina Sandler

David Willis

Special Effects

Steve Patino's S.P.F.X.

Supervisor:

Steve Patino

Costume Design

Alexandra Welker

Costume Supervisor

Susan Michalek

Key Make-up

Michelle Buhler

Tattoo Artist

Fernando LaFarga

Key Hairstylist

Scott Williams

Titles/Opticals

Cinema Research

Corporation

Music

Mader

Original Songs:

Tito Larriva

Music Producer

Tito Larriva

Music Supervisor

Charlie Midnight

Music Editor

Steve Borne

Songs

"Dan Y Dwr" performed

by Enya; "Ah, Sweet

Mystery of Life"

performed by Richard

Crooks; "Cumbia

campesina" by Calixto

A. Ochoa, performed

by Los Corraleros de

Majagual; "Chocolate

cuca" by Tito Larriva,

Nick Vincent, "La Vida

delicioso", "Samba

mojo", "Somebody to

Love", "Down on

Larriva, Charlie

Midnight, "Primera de

la noche", "Para arriba

para abajo", "Circus

Chair", "Papa Joe"

by Tito Larriva,

performed by Tito and

Tarantula; "Christmas

with Pizza Again"

by and performed

by Mabel Allbright;

"Looking Towards

Tomorrow" by and

performed by Steve

Randazzo; "Romeo's

Aria" by Mickey

Cottrell, performed

by Steve Buscemi,

Rosie Perez

Choreography

Alexandre Magno

Supervising Sound Editor

Eliza Paley

Dialogue Editor

Branka Mrkic

Sound Mixer

Pawel Wdowczak

ADR Recordist

Thomas Chan

Sound Re-recording Mixer

Dominic Tavella

Foley Artist

Brian Vancho

Stunt Co-ordinator

Chuck Borden

Cast

Rosie Perez

Mercedes

Harvey Keitel

Harry

Anthony Quinn

Emilio

Michael Delorenzo

Ernesto

Steve Buscemi

Mickey

Stanley Tucci

George

Gerardo

Armando

Steven Randazzo

Nick

Paul Herman

Pinky

Sam Fuller

Old Man on Highway

Holena

Elizabeth Bracco

Angel Aviles

Lorelei Leslie

Julie Shannon

Taxi Dancers

Francesco Messina

Francine

Mickey Cottrell

Little Mort

Sully Boyar

Porno Theatre Owner

Edward Lynch

Drexel

Edward Bunker

Jimmy

Kerol Rao

Little Mort's Girlfriend

Tito Larriva

Tito

Nick Vincent

Brie Howard Darling

Peter Atanassoff

Tony Marsico

Band Members

Adalberto Hernandez

Rafael Flores

Luis Perez

Carlos Quinonez

Dancing Men

Sam Rockwell

Polish Guy

Alex Magno

Lead Dancer

Mario Arias

Squid Man

Quentin Tarantino

Bartender, Club X

Yul Vasquez
Waiter, Club X
Vic Argo
Santa Claus
Lelia V. Goldoni
Venice Waitress
Myron L. Hall
Venice Beach Kid
Anthony Powers
Casting Director
Tony Vera
Devino Tricoche
Fire Eaters
Jim Palmer
Steve Simich
Red Morton
Drunk Guys

Jay Bella
Bar Man
Santos Morales
Emilio's Assistant
Niko Montero
Emilio's Grandson

9.225 feet
102 minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour

Los Angeles. Mercedes dreams of being an actress, but earns her living as a taxi dancer. At the dance club where she works, she meets up with her boyfriend, Harry, a television actor down on his luck. She dances with a Mexican labourer named Ernesto who steps on her feet but quickly becomes infatuated with her, returning another night to admire her moves. While gravedigging, Ernesto cares for an older man, named Emilio, who is upset at his mother's funeral. Emilio gives him his card and invites him to come and work for him if he ever needs help.

Mercedes attends several casting calls without success. She offers to give Ernesto a lift to his place one night, but when he vomits in her car she brings him back to her own motel room. They spend a chaste night together, and Ernesto has her name tattooed on his chest the next day. They visit Venice Beach where Ernesto is hoisted aloft in a chair by fire-eating jugglers, although Mercedes misses seeing the event.

Ernesto visits Emilio and gets a job delivering mysterious parcels around town, earning him enough money to buy presents for Mercedes. They go out to a fancy nightclub and enjoy themselves, but when Harry shows up, Mercedes leaves with him, abandoning Ernesto. At Harry's place he explains

that if he had \$10,000 dollars he could leave his wife and go back to New York. Escaping from Harry's when his wife returns unexpectedly, Mercedes meets a famous producer who seems about to give her a big break when he dies. Ernesto becomes more avid in his pursuit, and eventually Mercedes and he have sex. She explains that she needs \$10,000 dollars. Ernesto earns the money by killing a man for Emilio, and presents her with the cash. Realising that he is now in trouble, Mercedes makes a phone call to arrange for them to get away, but Ernesto is fatally shot by men revenging the previous murder. Mercedes leaves unknowingly with the money he hid in her handbag, and visits Venice Beach where the fire-eating jugglers raise her upwards.

Watching *Somebody to Love* is like attending a party in a strange city where you don't know anyone: attractive but bizarre guests, all hyped up and inebriated, keep telling you strange intimate stories about their lives, and then dashing off to get more punch. You're constantly left feeling complicit and abandoned by turns. Intrigues are brewing all around you, but no one will tell you what's really going on.

This effect is partly fostered by the story itself. Most of the characters in the film are self-absorbed dreamers intent on incompatible goals: Mercedes wants to be an actress and be both emotionally unattached and have Harry to herself (not an impossible project on the evidence we see); Harry also wants freedom and Mercedes' stature-amplifying mirror of admiration; Ernesto just wants Mercedes and will brook no logical argument. As the title banally underscores, everyone wants someone to love, but they all keep making bad object choices, and realising their mis-



Ladies' excuse me: Rosie Perez, Michael Delorenzo

takes too late. It's a melancholy theme common to the European art movies and American independent films that Rockwell pays explicit homage to here, especially the work of Fellini and Cassavetes. (The film is dedicated to "Federico and Giulietta", namechecking both Fellini in general and Giulietta Massina's character in *Nights of Cabiria* specifically, while the taxi dance club is partly modelled on the strip club in Cassavetes' *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie*.)

However, since the kind of verbalised introspection that is common to these exemplars is unacceptably pretentious in contemporary American films, Rockwell has to illustrate the characters' anomie and confusion through self-consciously oblique epiphanic moments. Sometimes these work in spite of themselves – for example, the twinned scenes of Ernesto and Mercedes hoisted aloft by fire-eating jugglers, the second scene underscoring that finally Mercedes can see things, literally, from Ernesto's point of view, albeit too late. Other times these archly illustrative moments crunch the gears too quickly, as when Harry narrates a hilarious flashback about his abortive attempt to play a gorilla, that, although funny, breaks the film's wistful spell all too abruptly. Perhaps the impression that everyone is in a different movie was intentional, but it all never quite clicks together.

Still, Rockwell has a sharp eye for atmosphere, and is particularly good at evoking a deserted feel from the clutter of Hispanic East Los Angeles. A long single shot of a tattooed Mexican worker waking up his colleagues in a decrepit trailer park lingers for no other reason than its intense beauty, lovingly photographed as it is by Robert Yeoman (who worked on the similarly limpid *Drugstore Cowboy*). Rockwell brings a cagey, East Coast Jarmusch aesthetic to his West Coast setting and it works, if only intermittently. It would therefore be a shame if he allowed his stories to be steamrollered to fit the narrative template of studio films.

Rockwell needs to keep a tighter grip on his actors, however. He tends to indulge them too much. Rosie Perez, although a blooming actress for whom the part was written, is given too many flashy star turns, crying and mugging and emoting all over the shop in takes that go on for too long. Rockwell has also caught that pernicious bug which persuades independent directors that twee cameos (here from Quentin Tarantino, Sam Fuller, and Anthony Quinn) will somehow carry a weak film for the cinephile audience. Having built his underground reputation on some remarkable short films (*Lenz* and *Hero* most notably), he seems to be struggling with translating his ideas into feature length, as *In the Soup* also confirmed. Like many excellent short form writers, he's straining to make the transition to the big bites where the money is. If short films, like short stories, were more valued, he might prefer to get on with what he clearly does best.

Leslie Felperin

Spanking the Monkey

USA 1994

Director: David O. Russell

Certificate

tbc
Distributor
Metro Tartan
Production Company
Buckeye
Communications
production/
Sweater Films

Executive Producers

Stanley F. Buchthal
Janet Grillo
David O. Russell

Producer

Dean Silvers

Line Producer

Jon Resnik

Associate Producer

Cheryl Miller Houser

Production Co-ordinator

Natascha Tillmanns

Location Managers

Dan Projansky
Janet Grillo

Assistant Directors

John O'Rourke
Chad Braden
Ashley Fierman

Casting

Ellen Parks

Screenplay

David O. Russell

Script Supervisor

Margaret Schnipper

Director of Photography

Michael Mayer

2nd Unit Director of Photography

Mark Schmidt

Editor

Pamela Martin

Production Designer

Susan Block

Set Dressers

Todd Nicky
Lars Bjornlund

Costume Design

Sarah Bernoy
Michael DeCola
Russell Glover
Lucio Seixas
Chantal Toub

Make-up/Hairstylist

Carolyn Greco

Titles/Opticals

Eastern Optical EFX

Music

David Carbonara

Solo Guitar Performed by

Larry Saltzman

Music Supervisor

Bonnie Greenberg

Songs

"Sheila", "Thursday",
"Let's Take a Trip
Together", "In Spite
of Me", "Mary, Won't
You Call My Name?"
by Mark Sandman,
performed
by Morphine

Supervising Sound Editor

Steven Visscher

Sound Editor

Jeff Kashner

Sound Mixer

William Tzouris

Sound Re-recorder

Reilly Steele

Dog Trainer

David Russell

Cast

Jeremy Davies

Raymond Aibelli

Elizabeth Newitt

Bus Woman

Benjamin Hendrickson

Tom Aibelli

Alberta Watson

Susan Aibelli

Carla Gallo

Toni Peck

Liberty Jean

Archer Martin

Motel Women

Matthew Puckett

Nicky

Zak Orth

Curtis

Josh Weinstein

Joel

Judah Domke

Don

Nancy Fields

Dr Wilson

Judette Jones

Aunt Helen

Caroline Paolini

Mailman

Neil Connie Wallace

Walter Hooten

Uleana Stratton

Fran Gibson

Jed Resnick

Fran's Son

Angela Grillo

Nurse

Jim Marcus

Dr Marcus

Richard Husson

Dr Peck

Ty-Ranne Grimsdahl

Secretary

William Keeler

Dean

Dean Silvers

Boss

John Schermerling

Trucker

Lucky

Frank the Dog

the feet

the minutes

In colour

carrying her back and forth to the bathroom. She is miserable and manipulative, revealing that she was forced to agree to give up her own medical career in order to have a child. Family dog Lucky's rabid interest in Ray's trips to the bathroom prevents him from masturbating. He goes out with some old schoolmates to a dangerous cliff-top above a tiny pool, but he gets in a fight with one of them who draws attention to the sexiness of his mother.

Out walking Lucky, Ray meets Toni, a high school student who seems to be attracted to him. Their brief courtship is unsatisfactory – as they kiss she keeps asking him what is wrong and even suggests he might be gay. Ray gets rough with her, and is horrified when her psychiatrist father phones Susan to complain. His mother now has him washing her back and applying lotion to her thighs. Hope of escape flickers as Ray talks her into summoning an irritating aunt to take over his nurturing duties, but the night before he is due to leave for his internship mother and son get drunk and end up spending the night together.

Woken by the aunt, they evade discovery, but Ray has missed his train, and he explodes at the aunt, who promptly storms off. Forced to take his mother to the doctor's, he finds out that she should have been mobile some time before. His philandering father then drops by and tells him that, since business has been so bad, he can no longer pay Ray's college tuition. Ray finds solace with Toni, but Susan discovers them together and hits her. As she runs off to tell her dad, a furious and frustrated Ray almost rapes his mother. He tells his father on the phone that he has slept with her, and after Toni's dad has come round and Susan has flirted with him as if nothing had happened, Ray tries to kill first himself and then his mother. He goes off with the gang of schoolfriends to the cliff-top, stunning them all by jumping into the ravine. Unbeknownst to anyone, he survives the fall and hitches a lift into the dawn onboard a giant truck.

Spanking the Monkey might be a sly Beavisite euphemism for masturbation, but there is no trace of either fevered self-indulgence or an adolescent smirk in this bold and beguilingly subtle Oedipal drama. The humour which is a constant factor in writer/director/executive producer David O. Russell's startlingly accomplished and vivid feature debut never diminishes the psychological impact of a compelling storyline. In fact it heightens it, so that the taboo subject matter appears not as a potentially exploitative novelty but as the organic and inexorable outcome of an entirely convincing situation.

Russell, a New Yorker with a video project about housing conditions and two shorts, *Bingo Inferno* (1987) and *Hairway to the Stars* to his credit, has an impressive eye for detail. The domestic rituals of food-making, ablution and brushing the family dog's infected



Sultry momma: Alberta Watson

gums are used to heighten Ray's feelings of frustration and claustrophobia. As the story takes ever more dangerous and sensual turns, clever physical observations – from the sublimely off-putting brace-like contraption Toni removes from her mouth in mid-kiss, to the fascinating texture of the denim covering on Susan's plaster cast – are the signposts pointing the way. The dialogue glistens too, full of little mirror fragments reflecting back and forth, like the argument Ray has with his mother over whether the correct word for him to use in his college project on HIV positive children is "stigmatise" or "ostracise".

The hero – and for all his sweatiness and his hysteria, such a mighty weight of psychosexual forces are arrayed against Ray that he is a hero – seems to have some subconscious idea of what is happening to him but does not, at least until the very end, have the ability to do anything about it. Similarly, the audience are so effectively sucked into his story that they are unable to pull themselves back from it enough to judge him until Ray starts to do so himself (at one point, harrowingly scraping his skin to a red ruin with a metal brush). That this should be the case is a tribute to two impeccable central performances from Jeremy Davies and Alberta Watson: he nervy, she needy, their characters entwined with suitably epoch-making consequences.

Spanking the Monkey's great virtue is the complexity of its power relations. Feeling her life slipping out of control, Susan uses the power that she has to profoundly destructive effect. Elsewhere it is equally hard to separate weakness from strength. The apparently vulnerable Toni has a clear idea of what she wants, and is quite ready to blow the whistle the minute she's not getting it. Even the despotic, bullying father-figure is shown – amid the relentless powerplay of someone else's office – as a figure of some pathos. In fact, the family dog in this film has more depth to its character than the lead role in many a less adventurous production. David O. Russell is to be roundly congratulated: however many awkward silences this film causes at future Russell family gatherings, the pleasure will have been worth the pain.

Ben Thompson

Suite 16

United Kingdom/Belgium 1994

Director: Dominique Deruddere

Certificate
tbc

Distributor
Feature Film Company

Production Companies
Corsan productions/
Theorema Films

Producer
Paul Breuls

Co-producer
Frank Bak

Associate Producers
Catherine Vandeleene
Bernard Mazauric
San Fu Maltha

Production Supervisor
Catherine Vandeleene

Production Managers
Bernard Mazauric
Julie Baines

Unit Manager
Roberto Robin

Post-production Manager
Peter Breuls

Assistant Directors
Marc Van der Bijl
Yann Thomas

Casting
Belgium:
Peter Breuls
Holland:
Hans Kemma Casting
France:
Nicole Octobon
Caroline Mazauric

Screenplay
Charles Higson
Lise Mayer

Director of Photography
Jean-François Robin

Camera Operator
Jean-Marc Bringuier

Editor
Kant Pan

Production Designer
Niek Kortekaas

Set Dresser
Maurice Zisswiler

Costume Design
Loret Meus

Costume Supervisor
Tine Claeys

Make-up/Hair
Brigitte Pleijzier
Marly van de Wardt

Titles/Opticals
Image Creations

Music
Walter Hus

Music Performed by
The Daniel String
Quartet
Double Bass:
Eric Mathot
Flute:
Janna van Mechelen
Guitar:
Michel Andina
Piano:
Michel Herr

Music Consultants
Linda van Waesberge
Mama Linda Brussels

Songs
"I'm a Monkey" by
R. D'Haene, M. Van der
Hallen, A. Pellemans,
performed by Ashbury
Faith; "I'm Still Alive"
by Arno Hintjens,
Ad Comminotto,
performed by Arno;
"When You Were
Sweet 16" by James
Thornon, performed
by Dani Klein

Supervising Sound Editor
Michele
Catonne-Masnier

Dialogue Editor
Vincent Guillon

Sound Recordists
Dirk Bombeij
Daniel Brisseau

Music Mixers
Marc Neutens
Michael Andina
Marc Maerschallck

Sound Re-recording Mixers
Ray Merrin
Graham Daniel

Foley
Marie-Jeanne
Wijckmans

Stunt Co-ordinator
Pierre Rosso

Cast
Pete Postlethwaite
Glover
Antonie Kamerling
Chris
Geraldine Pailhas
Helen
Tom Jansen
Paul
Bart Slegers
Rudy
Suzanne Colin
Woman with Dog
Viviane de Mynck
Woman Scene 1
Dirk Roofthoof
Marc
Corinne Riviere
Shop Manageress
Henri Masini
Cashier
Stephane Leveque
Room Service Waiter
Valerie van Nitsen
Marielle van Sauers
Françoise Le Bihan
Florence Risler
Latifa Abdelmoujoud
Magali Cordelier
Veronique Levy
Lysiane Lahier-Bertrand
Inès Jourdan
Nathalie Lions
Laurence Rabattidevalle
Claire Mercier
Sarah Kunstlich
Sylvio Jourdan
Sylvie Beme
Prostitutes
Jean-Paul Ferrari
Male Prostitute
Stephanie Jacquinot
S&M Woman
Isabelle Maman
Jean Yves Bordet
Receptionists
Simone Helme
Frightened Woman
Vic Deruddere
Child in Bus

tbc feet
tbc minutes

Dolby stereo
In colour
Some Subtitles

Chris, a young gigolo/thief working the *côte d'azur*, is on the run after assaulting a fellow thug. In the Hotel West End in Nice, a woman cuts his face when he tries to take all her money. He knocks her down, stumbles through the corridors and bursts bleed-

ing into Suite 16. There Glover, a paraplegic confined to a motorised wheelchair, convinces Chris to lie low, offering him generous hospitality. The next day Chris realises he must stay when Glover tells him that he has heard that Chris' victim has died.

Fabulously wealthy, Glover soon persuades Chris to enjoy hired prostitutes, while being watched by Glover from his bedroom via surveillance cameras. At first, Chris refuses to perform but when he is offered money for the service, he responds athletically night after night with a string of beautiful girls. Eventually he agrees to a submissive bondage session, only to discover that, this time, Glover has hired a male prostitute to rape him.

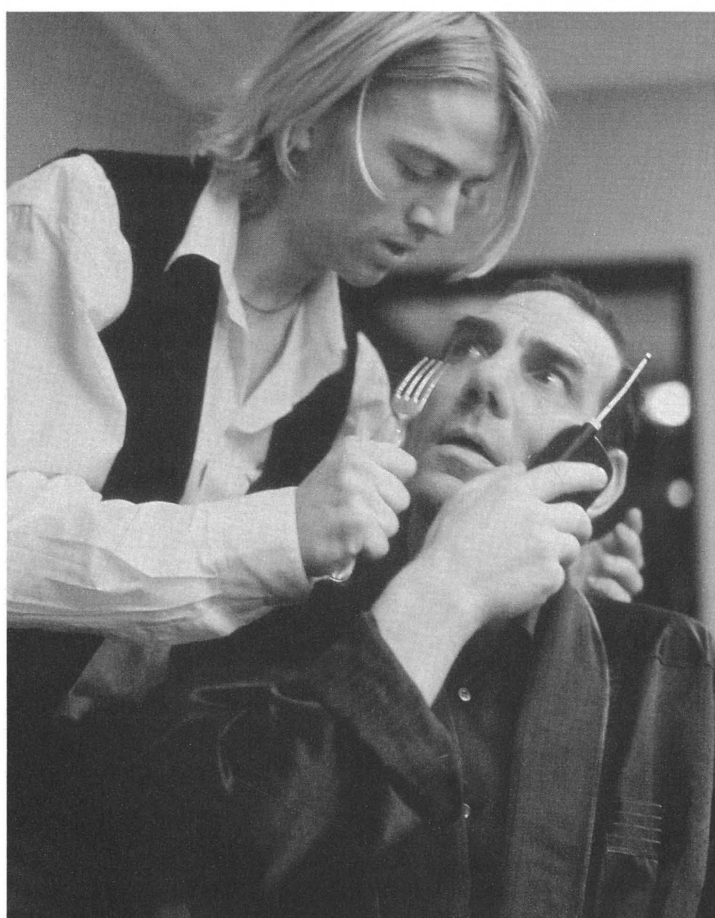
The next day, Chris demands full payment as he is leaving. Glover offers him a final bargain: Chris will receive enough money to realise his dream of running a nightclub in the Caribbean if he seduces and murders a young girl while wearing a microphone linked to Glover's suite. If he fails, he gets nothing. Meeting Helen, a perfume salesgirl, Chris follows her to a cliff-top chateau where, unable to go through with it, he fakes the murder. Afterwards he sees the woman from the hotel that he supposedly killed, alive and well. He returns to the suite and confronts Glover with his lie, revealing that he faked the girl's murder. Glover tells him to get out.

At the railway station, Chris runs into the brother of the thug he knocked out. They get drunk together but the one-time friend pulls a knife and tells him that his brother died from Chris' blow. Chris smashes his face with a rock and runs back to the hotel. He finds Glover dining Helen, who has usurped his place. She soon grows tired of Glover, however, and mocks his feeble attempt to have sex with her. Chris then begins to make love to her himself, but eventually he pushes Glover out of the room and smashes his video camera.

The following day, Chris and Helen are about to leave when Glover asks Helen for a farewell kiss. In the clinch, he injects her with a fatal poison. As Chris beats him to death, Glover thanks him. In the lobby, Glover's henchman, Paul, hands Chris the promised fortune. Chris refuses it and boards a bus. Seated behind him we see the badly-scarred face of his former friend.

The plot premise of *Suite 16* – an attractive young man performing sexual acts as a surrogate for a wealthy but disabled patron – is a well-known staple of softcore titillation. In most cases the patron is subsuming his desire for the surrogate through this bargain but here the power relations are known and understood by Pete Postlethwaite's literally wasted rich old roué and his hungry, vicious young protégé, Chris. As Postlethwaite's character Glover puts it: "Each of us has what the other wants."

Confining much of the action to the chilly elegance of Glover's suite – an art deco interior that somehow effortlessly



An eye for delicacies: Antonie Kamerling, Pete Postlethwaite

signifies decadence – *Suite 16* depicts the battle of wills for control of Chris' life as a sexual chess game with Glover as the master and Chris as a mere pawn. Any hint of desire between the two, however, is denied: vehemently by Chris and by Glover with the remark: "If I seem to be admiring your body it is only with nostalgia." Glover's need is to reclaim the experiences with women denied him by his condition, in particular the emotions he felt when he lost his virginity at the age of (sweet) 16, "When 16 really was 16." However, it is the terse scenes set outside the suite that lift *Suite 16* intermittently out of its resemblance to a skinflick. With their genuine feel for the desperate hustling ruthlessness and confusion of street life, these scenes of sexual commerce have a real edge.

By comparison, the apartment conflict often drags. Glover's supposed sophistication (crashingly, hilariously corny when he quotes straight-faced to Helen: "Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?") is a typical example of the man-of-culture image that jaded sex gurus are credited with in such films as *Emmanuelle*. Here Pete Postlethwaite brings a nasal, suburban creepiness to his role as a dapper, gliding ghoul in a selection of silk dressing gowns. Yet even Postlethwaite can't do much but corpse with such lines as: "He who aspires to be a hero must drink brandy."

Considering the script is by two British writers, Charles Higson and Lise Mayer, who are best known for their television comedy work, it is peculiar that the film has turned out so

humourless. Several scenes with potential for black comedy – such as when Chris can't perform with his first call girl because she is faking passion with the same patter he uses himself – are milked instead for maximum poignancy.

Director Dominique Deruddere's single previous release in this country was his sexual rites-of-passage film combining three of Charles Bukowski's short stories, *Crazy Love* (Wait Until Spring, *Bandini*, his 1989 film which starred Joe Mantegna and Faye Dunaway was never theatrically released here). Some of *Crazy Love*'s anarchic fervour survives here, mostly in depicting Chris' confused state of mind, while his lithe body remains centre-stage as an object venerated aesthetically far above those of the women. The figure of the European gigolo/bum hasn't enjoyed a fashionable currency in the movies since the decadent operatic phase of director Luchino Visconti's career during the 70s. In Visconti's *The Conversation Piece*, Helmut Berger played a similar handsome gigolo who invades the reclusive life of another sickly old aesthete played by Burt Lancaster. Deruddere and his scriptwriters try for similar high-culture resonances here but they are less convincing than Visconti at his most louche. Antonie Kamerling is neither as cultured nor as camp a figure as Berger – he's more of rough-and-ready Joe Dallesandro type. He is obviously a young actor of promise but as the veneer of his vanity is never allowed to crack, we never quite sympathise with his character's plight.

Nick James



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VIDEO

Mark Kermode and Geoffrey Macnab highlight their ten video choices of the month, and overleaf review, respectively, the rest of the rental and retail releases

VIDEO CHOICE

Hoop Dreams

Steve James/USA 1994

Two black American teenagers struggle to break into big-time basketball via a bizarre and tortuous route of college scholarship applications. Shot over a period of five years, this three hour documentary (which was made for the small screen) is an extraordinary portrait of the rigours of urban life in underprivileged America. Using such grim locations as the notorious Cabrini Green Housing Project, it draws the viewer into the world of William Gates and Arthur Agee, two young dreamers who grow up in front of the camera. We watch them try to make something of their lives against insurmountable odds (family breakdown, educational shortcomings, bankruptcy, drugs). Their chance of success is infinitesimal, yet the film never descends into depressing, downbeat realism. Boasting a handsome rap/jazz soundtrack, and shot through with breathtaking honesty, *Hoop Dreams* makes startling viewing. (S&S April 1995)

● Retail: Feature Film Company; £12.99; Certificate 15



Reach for the sky: 'Hoop Dreams'

A Sense of Freedom

John Mackenzie/UK 1978

There was a period in the 70s when Scottish television made a series of hard-hitting, unsentimental gangland dramas, many of them scripted by Peter McDougall. This adaptation of the famous autobiography by convicted murderer Jimmy Boyle falls loosely into that category. The early scenes, set on the grim streets of Glasgow, are unconvincing, mainly because Mackenzie seems intent on paying homage to Scorsese's *Mean Streets* and McDougall's script mindlessly celebrates machismo.

But once Boyle is behind bars, and engaged in permanent battle with the warders, it becomes altogether more moving. David Hayman plays him as a martyr-like figure with an indomitable will: "There's no coffin built I won't climb out of," Boyle protests. Whether or not the film does justice to its source material, it is certainly a very powerful allegory about free will and human dignity.

● Retail Premiere: Lumiere; £5.99; Certificate 18; 81 minutes; Producer Jeremy Isaacs; Screenplay Peter McDougall; Lead Actors David Hayman, Jake D'Arcy, Sean Scanlan

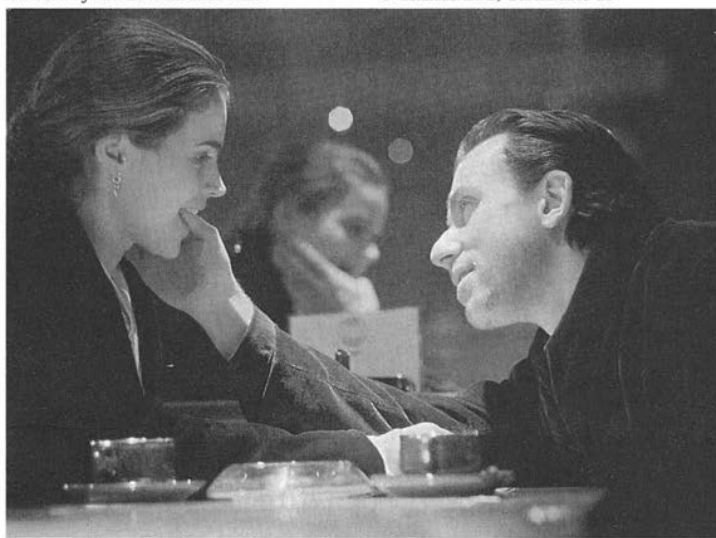
Captives

Angela Pope/UK 1994

A tightly woven psychological drama bristling with erotic energy and temptingly taboo intrigue. In the dingy confines of a British prison, an inmate (Tim Roth) with a dark marital secret and a dentist (Julia Ormond) recently betrayed by her beloved find illicit passion in one another's arms. Their relationship is noticed by another inmate who

blackmails Roth and sexually threatens Ormond. Produced with television co-financing, feature first-timer Angela Pope's claustrophobic love story is an alluring oddity which loses none of its power in its transition to the small screen. Roth and Ormond are excellently cast in the tormented lead roles and Keith Allen turns in an intriguing cameo as a delusional prisoner with an Elvis fixation. (S&S May 1995)

● Rental: EVE; Certificate 15



Love behind bars: Julia Ormond, Tim Roth in 'Captives'

Scanner Cop 2: Volkin's Revenge

Steve Barnett/USA 1994

The latest in the seemingly indestructible *Scanner* series, this maintains the high production-line standards which have become producer Pierre David's trademark. Having exhausted most of the head-exploding possibilities offered by David Cronenberg's original, scriptwriter Mark Sevi comes up with a novel new twist to the telepathic terrors. After escaping from prison, villainous scanner Carl Volkin (Patrick Kilpatrick) feeds on fellow telepaths, sucking their life-force to increase his own strength. Enjoyable scenes follow, not of cranial explosions but implosions, as unexpected victims are mentally vacuumed. Fans will not be disappointed, however, as the reliable skin-bursting effects are rolled out for the gory finale.

● Rental Premiere: First Independent; Certificate 18; 91 minutes; Producer Pierre David; Screenplay Mark Sevi; Lead Actors Daniel Quinn, Patrick Kilpatrick, Khrytsyne Haje, Robert Forster



Neurotic couple: Stanwyck and Douglas

The Strange Love of Martha Ivers

Lewis Milestone/USA 1946

Pitched fascinatingly between film noir and melodrama, this is a rich, over-determined affair which benefits from its collision of styles and an abundance of star power. Barbara Stanwyck's *femme fatale* is a less straightforwardly evil character than the one she played in *Double Indemnity*. In best Hollywood Freudian fashion, Robert Rossen's script roots her behaviour in an unhappy childhood. There's a splendid Gothic sequence in which the young Martha, driven to distraction by her wicked aunt (Judith Anderson reprising the evil shrew routine she perfected in *Rebecca*), beats the old biddy to death on the stairs. Van Heflin makes a surprisingly effective anti-hero, crumpled, cynical, but somehow charming. Arguably, though, the pick of the performances comes from a very neurotic Kirk Douglas in his screen debut as Martha's heavy-drinking husband, a man who has climbed to the top of the political ladder on the back of his wife's ambition. (MFB No. 151)

● Retail: Second Sight Film Noir; £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG

Stargate

Roland Emmerich/USA 1994

An ancient device buried for centuries beneath the desert enables a team of scientific stormtroopers to enter another world. There they encounter a civilisation reminiscent of ancient Egypt and ruled by an exotic shape-shifting alien. Roland Emmerich's big-budget, sci-fi epic is hugely enjoyable nonsense, with influences ranging from Erich von Däniken to Arthur C. Clarke, and creating a heady cocktail of delightfully

overblown fantasy. A crewcut-sporting Kurt Russell provides the macho militaristic lead, while a bespectacled James Spader cruises on autopilot as the sexy, sensitive scientist in charge of cracking the stargate's cosmic secrets. In the cinema this boasted moments of jaw-dropping visual wonder which are unavoidably diminished on video, but the pleasures of Dean Devlin's and Roland Emmerich's gloriously silly script keep this buoyant. A lot of fun.

(S&S February 1995)

● Rental: Guild; Certificate PG



Shifting worlds: 'Stargate'

Theatre of Blood

Douglas Hickox/UK 1973

A very British slice of Grand Guignol which will be cherished by anyone who has ever received a bad review. With his rich, warbling voice and love of the melodramatic gesture, Vincent Price is ideally cast as Edward Lionheart, the Shakespeare-loving actor-manager out to get even with the critics. He murders them in a variety of ingenious ways, all inspired by scenes in the Bard's plays. One is drowned in a vat of wine, another has his head cut off; meanwhile, poor old Meredith Merrildrew (played with great zest by a pink-quiffed Robert Morley) is

force-fed his pet poodles and quite literally stuffed to death. Director Hickox leavens the horror with plenty of gallows humour and visual gags. Look out for a duel-fighting sequence in which Vincent Price and Ian Hendry take swipes at each other as they bounce up and down on trampolines. A distinguished supporting cast (Diana Rigg, Michael Horden, Dennis Price) revels in the comic carnage. Vincent Price manages to make Lionheart a perversely sympathetic villain – however macabre his revenge on the critics, you can't help thinking they deserve it. (MFB No. 473)

● Retail: United Artists; £10.99; Certificate 18

Food for thought: Robert Morley in the black comedy 'Theatre of Blood'



Dead calm: 'Shallow Grave'

Shallow Grave

Danny Boyle/UK 1994

In a spacious Edinburgh flat, a narcissistic trio (boy, girl and geek) interview potential new flatmates, scornfully rejecting each wide-eyed hopeful as unfit to join their very private world. Enter Hugo (Keith Allen), a mile-wide barrowboy who uses charm and money to woo the solipsistic threesome, before promptly dropping dead, leaving only his naked, stiffening body and a suitcase full of money under the bed. That the flatmates decide not to hand over the cash is unsurprising – but that they should be capable of disposing of the decaying corpse is another matter altogether. Owing a great deal to *Blood Simple* and the American independent tradition, Boyle's feature debut is a startlingly assured piece of work. John Hodge's sinewy script has the kind of classic simplicity and rigid structure which most novice directors can only dream of; the ensemble cast are excellent (in particular the gangly Christopher Eccleston); and Simon Boswell's edgy score is appropriately unsettling. (S&S January 1995)

● Rental: PolyGram; Certificate 18

Choose Me

Alan Rudolph/USA 1984

Stylised romantic comedy, shot on a low budget but looking as if Vincente Minnelli had designed it. It opens in gaudy style, with Teddy Pendergrass crooning the theme tune against a backdrop of neon-lit streets. The narrative is thoroughly contrived (it's all about pairing off lonely hearts in the big city) and sometimes the dialogue is on the arch side. But one of Rudolph's most refreshing traits is his complete lack of interest in naturalism – he's a true modernist, preoccupied with role playing, identity and deception. Keith Carradine plays Mickey, who asks every woman he meets to marry him. Genevieve Bujold shows off her gorgeously husky voice as the local radio agony aunt and Lesley-Ann Warren is wonderful as Eve, the tough but tender owner of a singles bar. (MFB No. 615)

● Retail: First Class Films; £15.99; Certificate 15



Alone in the city: Genevieve Bujold



Kafkaesque film noir: 'D.O.A.'

D.O.A.

Rudolph Maté/USA 1950

If Kafka was a Hollywood scriptwriter, then this is probably the film he would have penned. Its lead character Frank Bigelow is a small-town insurance man, a sort of mid-west Josef K. Its delirious opening, which sees Bigelow lurching down a seemingly interminable

police corridor to announce his own murder, has never been trumped. It's also an impressively detailed affair, with an ingenious but baffling plot and a huge array of locations. There are exhilarating, documentary-style sequences of Bigelow roaming the streets of San Francisco, a sortie to a nightclub, and even some surreal comedy involving a convention of travelling salesmen. (MFB No. 582)

● Retail: Second Sight Film Noir; £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG

Reviews in *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound* are cited in parentheses. A retail video that has previously been reviewed in the rental section will be listed only and the film review reference given. The term 'Premiere' refers to a film that has had no prior UK theatrical release and is debuting on video. □ denotes closed captioning facility

Rental

Above the Rim

Jeff Pollack; USA 1994; First Independent; Certificate 15

Set against a backdrop of sidewalk basketball, a high-minded security guard (with an implausible guilty secret) clashes with his villainous brother. Pollack's ambitious street-fable boasts a cracking rap soundtrack and some impressive visual coups, but the narrative veers between the predictable and the incredible. (S&S December 1994)

Crooklyn

Spike Lee; USA 1994; Universal; Certificate 12 A Brooklyn family endure New York urban living. Spike Lee's personal reminiscence of 70s street-life bears the 'labour of love' stamp, and the result is unengaging. An excellent pop soundtrack and the presence of reliable Alfre Woodard lend appeal. (S&S December 1994)

Dream Lover

Nicholas Kazan; USA 1993; 20.20; Certificate PG An uptight yuppie (James Spader) meets, marries and then begins to mistrust an alluring young temptress (Mädchen Amick). Writer/director Kazan clearly intended this awkward psychological thriller to reveal the unknown, secret side of a life. Instead, after a promising start, it meanders off into preposterous, dramatic hyperbole. Disappointing. (S&S December 1994)

A Good Man in Africa

Bruce Beresford; USA 1994; Universal; Certificate 15 Beresford's misjudged rendering of William Boyd's acclaimed novel is a sobering lesson in how not to film a book. A group of unpleasant Brits romp around in Africa, catching the clap and annoying the locals. (S&S December 1994)

Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles

Neil Jordan; USA 1994; Warner; Certificate 18 Anne Rice made disapproving noises about the casting of this glossy adaptation of her cult novel (she referred to Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt as "like Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer"), but later reneged on her comments. The finished product remains largely faithful to her original, bearing the same tedious, pompous trademarks which characterise her writing. Jordan directs with visual aplomb, but with far too much respect for the text. Big book, big budget, big snore. (S&S February 1995) □

Only You

Norman Jewison; USA 1994; Columbia TriStar; Certificate PG Talented leading man Robert Downey Jr lifts this flimsy, flirty romantic comedy and makes the most of a potentially pedestrian part. An infatuated young



Street life: Spike Lee's 'Crooklyn'

man assumes a false identity to win the affections of a star-crossed lover (Marisa Tomei). Tomei pitches her performance between Liza Minnelli and Goldie Hawn, and manages to keep her comic dignity intact. (S&S February 1995) □

Solitaire for 2

Gary Sinyor; UK 1994; EVE; Certificate 15 A successful yuppie, specialising in the art of body language, meets his match when he falls for a feisty young mind-reader who knows his every thought. Up-and-coming British film-maker Gary Sinyor (co-director of *Leon the Pig Farmer*) fails to explore the intriguing comic potential offered by the promising premise, leaving this odd-ball pic stranded somewhere between satire and farce. (S&S February 1995)

Star Trek Generations

David Carson; USA 1994; Paramount; Certificate PG The second worst out of the seven *Star Trek* movies, *Generations* suffers because it doesn't have the sense to dump the old codgers (Captain Kirk returns from the

dead). In the distant future, Captain Picard calls on the spirit of his heroic predecessor to assist him in a struggle against a fantasy-crazed fiend. The scene in which a heavily trussed William Shatner wrestles a lean Malcolm McDowell is laughable. (S&S March 1995)

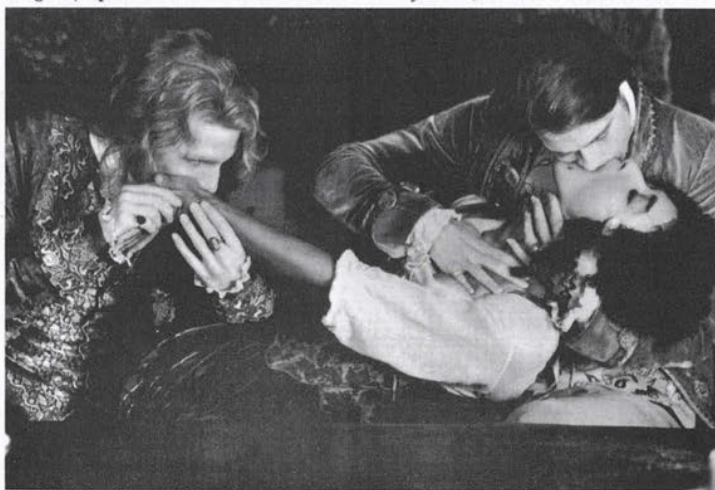
Timecop

Peter Hyams; USA 1994; Universal; Certificate 18 An inept sci-fi thriller, full of narrative holes and brought to its knees by leading man Jean-Claude Van Damme's poor English and an inability to act. A future cop, charged with policing the practice of time travel, is presented with a unique opportunity to save his marriage. (S&S January 1995)

Rental premiere

Automatic

John Murlowski; USA 1994; First Independent; Certificate 15; 81 minutes Producers Ken



Blood brothers: Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt in 'Interview with the Vampire'

Badish, Avi Neshet; Screenplay Susan Lambert, Patrick Highsmith; Lead Actors Olivier Gruner, Daphne Ashbrook, John Glover

Despite its unoriginal premise (an obedient robot turns on its creator when instructed to aid and abet a felony), this production line sci-fi thriller rolls along like a well-oiled wheel and even provides a few unexpected plot twists. Using Olivier Gruner's woodenness to advantage, director Murlowski draws a surprisingly sympathetic performance from the high-kicking hero. Gruner plays an engaging innocent abroad and is nicely complemented by Ashbrook's punchy belle-turned-bad-girl. Scene-stealing moments, however, are performed by John Glover who excels as the slimy head of a robot manufacturers, RobGen. Efficient entertainment.

Cops and Robbers

Michael Ritchie; USA 1994; Columbia TriStar; Certificate PG; 89 minutes; Producers Ned Tanen, Nancy Graham, Ronald L. Schwary; Screenplay Bernie Somers; Lead Actors Chevy Chase, Jack Palance, Dianne Wiest, Robert Davi A suburban family dullard (Chevy Chase), obsessed with TV cop shows, is delighted when a grizzled detective (Jack Palance) selects his dreary home as the scene for a stake-out. Although infinitely more entertaining than his current big-screen offering *Man of the House*, this uneasy comedy still presents Chase with scant opportunity to flex his scathing, satirical muscles. □

Digital Man

Phillip Roth; USA 1994; Columbia TriStar; Certificate 15; 90 minutes; Producer Talaat Captain; Screenplay Phillip Roth; Lead Actors Matthias Hues, Ken Olandt, Kristen Dalton, Adam Baldwin A highly advanced combat robot, dispatched to locate a group of renegade soldiers who possess nuclear firepower, is nefariously manipulated by its creators and corrupt superiors. A run-of-the-mill sci-fi action, replete with the usual gadgetry, martial arts battles and deadpan acting from Hues.

Op Centre

Lewis Teague; USA 1994; Hi Fliers; Certificate 15; 114 minutes; Producer Richard L. O'Connor; Screenplay Steve Sohmer; Lead Actors Harry Hamlin, Carl Weathers, Kim Cattrall, Lindsay Frost America's newly established Crisis Management Centre is given a baptism of fire when a renegade KGB colonel steals three nuclear warheads and auctions them to the highest bidder. Stylish made-for-TV action pic boosted by Teague's no-nonsense direction.

The Secretary

Andrew Lane; USA 1994; First Independent; Certificate 15; 89 minutes; Producer Pierre David; Screenplay; Grahame Flashner; Lead Actors Mel Harris, Sheila Kelly, Barry Bostwick, James Russo First the nanny, then the temp, now the secretary - America's seemingly insatiable appetite for subverting 'nice' female stereotypes continues. This upbeat addition to the burgeoning genre is an enjoyably frisky romp. A career woman with a dark secret is blackmailed by a psychotic employee. Meetings are bugged, confidences broken, families shattered and lives wrecked. A hoot of a movie!

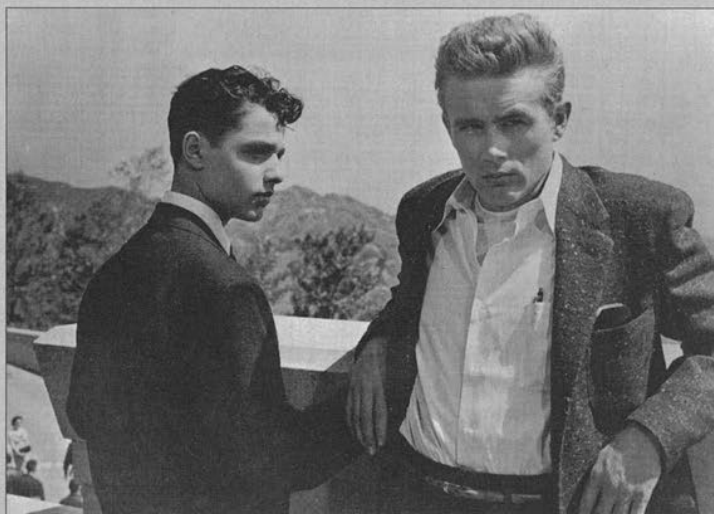
Daddy cool

Living in Hollywood, I play host to a lot of visitors from out of town, but I'm not much of a tour guide – guests are free to explore Disneyland and Universal City on their own. They might convince me to stop by the Chinese Theatre, but the only places I really enjoy showing visitors are movie locations: the wrought-iron heaven of the Bradbury building as seen in *Blade Runner* or the mad Tower Drive apartment Elliot Gould inhabited in Altman's *The Long Goodbye*.

However, the one don't-miss stop for me is the Griffith Observatory. There you can gaze out over the city, smog permitting, or watch men cruising in the park below. The real romance of the place, though, derives from Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause*, as it is here that his teenagers rumbled, confronted death and contemplated eternity under phoney stars. It is amazing the resonance the place has, not just for me, but for everyone I show it to. For who has not fallen in love with the semi-tough kids of Ray's masterpiece, the youth movie that invented the genre?

Rebel is a film shrouded in Hollywood legend, not just because of the premature deaths of so many of its actors (how can Dennis Hopper still be alive?), but because of the infinite promise they all showed. James Dean, Natalie Wood, Sal Mineo – they were so young in 1955, yet they would never show such charisma again. Their charisma derives at least in part from the genius of Ray's casting, which is so perfect that it's hard not to confuse fact with fiction. Wasn't James Dean really Jim, the conflicted high school student proving his masculinity by racing fast cars? It's a shock to remember that this film was released after Dean's death, for the Dean myth couldn't exist without it. However brilliant the actor was in *East of Eden* and *Giant*, this is the film in which he defined his persona. To see the film again is to realise how contemporary Dean's persona remains. Unlike Clift, who had a post-war maturity about him, or Brando with his mumbling machismo, Dean is all youthful intensity. For the first time, an actor shows us the geek in the teenage heartthrob, and shows how hipness can derive from timidity. To watch Dean curl up in the foetal position with a mechanical monkey, to hear his *Beavis & Butthead* laugh, is to see a whole new screen body language being born. Club kids today (and every young actor from Alexis Arquette to Christian Slater) strive for the glamour of Dean's Jim.

Rebel is as much about juvenile delinquency as Ray's *Bigger Than Life* is about the drug cortisone. How could *Rebel*'s protagonists – so searching, so well-meaning – ever be perceived as a threat to society? True, they fight and 'chicky' race, they even play with guns, but compared to the Los Angeles gangs of the 90s they seem downright cuddly. Ray chooses to show us not how fearsome his teenagers are, but how desperate. They are rebels in an Emersonian sense, trying



A timid hero: James Dean with Sal Mineo at the Griffith Observatory

to build themselves a world outside of a corrupt society. Yet they can never completely sever the links with that society – they can never eliminate the traces of it within themselves.

Rebel offers us three teenagers, each living in a dysfunctional family. Judy can't understand why her father calls her a tramp, why he slaps her when she tries to kiss him. Plato, the film's most friable character, spends more time with the maid than with his elusive rich parents. Jim keeps brawling with other kids.

It's incredible how much Ray invests himself in the teenagers – most particularly in Jim, whose quest seems to become the film-makers' own. As we follow Jim through his first day in a new town, we gradually realise what he is searching for: a model of masculine behaviour that he can emulate. His father (played by Mr Magoo, Jim Backus) is a roast capon of a dad, fussing about in an apron, cowering before his shrewish wife. Jim pleads with his father to be strong, but the poor old sissy just doesn't have it in him. Jim's outrage over his father's weakness builds ominously until in a fit of rage he throttles his father and almost murders him.

One can easily imagine Jim turning into a fag-basher, a white supremacist, or some other crypto-fascist. Instead, he becomes the moral centre of the film, forming a romantic bond with Judy, looking after the desperate Plato, and going to the police when a rival teenager is accidentally killed. As Jim learns moral lesson after moral lesson, the film is in danger of becoming pat. Yet Ray doesn't inflate the characters' epiphanies. Nor does he suggest that right action can avert tragedy. However good Jim's intentions are, he cannot save Plato, who is shot down on the observatory steps.

It is easy to feel knowing about the characters' inchoate sexuality. Plato is obviously in love with Jim, Jim's probably a closet gay, and Judy will find out soon enough why Jim's kisses are just pecks. Ultimately, though, the film is less about sex than about how we form makeshift

families to compensate for the failure of blood ties. This is the real reason for the inclusion of Plato in the Jim and Judy relationship. It is also why the film still exerts such a pull. Had it resolved itself into a simple boy-girl romance, *Rebel* would not have the same resonance as it does. Instead, Ray offers us his three main characters, alone in a deserted mansion, trying to recreate the bonds of family.

There's something strangely moving about Jim's need to protect Plato. Ray invents a beautiful bit of symbolism to convey Jim's paternal impulse. Twice Jim offers the shivering Plato his jacket, once at the police station in the film's opening and again in the final sequence at the observatory. It is only the second time that Plato accepts Jim's offer. Moments later he is gunned down. Jim watches silently as the paramedics load Plato's corpse onto a stretcher. He bends down to zip up the jacket. It bothers him that Plato was always cold.

The accumulation of details such as these gives the film its power, but the thing that really makes it stay in the mind is its evocative settings. There are the more mundane spaces, such as Jim's home and the police station, which Ray renders so beautifully with his dense use of CinemaScope. Then there are the more symbolic locations – the observatory, the palisades and the deserted mansion – all suggestive of the vastness of eternity and the need for shelter.

Who can count the number of films spawned by *Rebel Without a Cause*? The more recent examples range from *Natural Born Killers* to *True Romance* to the upcoming Antonia Bird disappointment *Mad Love*. Most of these offspring feature a soundtrack instead of a narrative, fast cutting in place of imaginative visuals. It's painful to think how uninspired Hollywood film-making has become since the days of Nicholas Ray. But it's a revelation to look at his masterpiece again and witness it truly growing younger with the years. *'Rebel Without a Cause'* is released on the Elite Collection

Retail

Another Way (Egymásra Néve)

Károly Makk; Hungary 1982; Art House; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18

The post-1956 Hungary that Károly Makk evokes in *Another Way* is a grim and grey place in which emotions seem to have been dulled by events following the failed uprising. Jadwiga Jankowska-Cieslak, who won Best Actress award at Cannes for her performance, plays a spirited young journalist who kicks against the system. Grazyna Szapolowska is the married woman colleague she falls in love with. (MFB No. 586)

The Asphyx

Peter Newbrook; UK 1972; Art House; £12.99; Certificate 15

Ponderous horror film set in Victorian England, with characters who look as if they're on leave from *Upstairs, Downstairs*. Robert Stephens is a wealthy scientist whose pet hobby is filming the recently dead. When smudges show up on his film, he believes he has discovered the asphyx – the spirit of death. Murky and confusing, but you can see why cinematographer Freddie Young was fascinated, as it allows him to experiment with old-fashioned, hand-cranked movie cameras. (MFB No. 471)

At the Earth's Core

Kevin Connor; UK 1976; Beyond Vision Cult Classic; £9.99; Certificate PG

This adaptation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' sci-fi novel is a rip-roaring affair, even if the dinosaurs, volcanic explosions and other special effects gimmickry would look better on a big screen. Doug McClure and Peter Cushing play two Victorian scientists who venture beneath the earth's crust into the fantasy kingdom of Pellucidar, a glorified theme park where danger lurks. (MFB No. 510)

Bad Boys

Richard Rosenthal; USA 1983; Warner Home Video; £10.99; Certificate 18 (MFB No. 592)

Batman

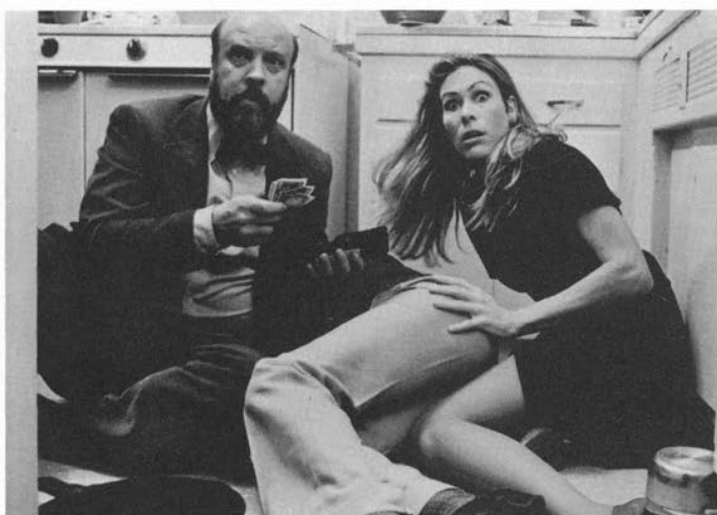
Leslie H. Martinson; USA 1966; Fox Video; £12.99; Certificate U
Big screen spin-off of the popular TV series. This filmic foray into high camp is as far removed from Tim Burton's noirish vision of the Caped Crusader as it's possible to imagine. Biff! Pow! Wham! are the watchwords. The highlight is Batman's wrestling match with an exploding shark ("That was an unfortunate animal that happened to swallow a floating mine"). (MFB No. 396)

Convey

Director Sam Peckinpah; USA 1978; Warner Home Video; £10.99; Certificate 15 (MFB No. 535)

The Cosmic Man

Herman Green; USA 1958; First Class Films; £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG
Another in the series of Killer B movies resurrected by First Class Films. The contraption in which visiting alien John Carradine arrives on earth (something resembling an oversize golf ball) is intriguing, but overall this is low budget film-making at its clunking worst,



Good, clean living: 'Eating Raoul'

full of unnecessary establishing shots and interminable dreary dialogue – talk is cheap but special effects are not. (MFB No. 357)

Dangerous Game

Abel Ferrara; USA 1993; PolyGram; £10.99; Certificate 18 (S&S July 1994)

The Devil's Eye (Bjävulens Öga)

Ingmar Bergman; Sweden 1960; Tartan Video; £15.99; Subtitles; B/W; Certificate 18 Not exactly vintage Bergman, but an intriguingly stylised comedy which depicts hell as a baroque, courtly kingdom, all gilt and mirrors, and Satan as a sort of senior civil servant in a dapper dark suit. He sends Don Juan (Jarl Kulle) back to earth to seduce virginal country parson's daughter, Bibi Andersson. There's something typically cold and detached about Bergman's directorial style, but the contrast between the homely, simple ways of the country folk and the brittle, superficial urbanity of hell's denizens is neatly drawn. (MFB No. 349)

The Driver

Walter Hill; USA 1978; Warner Home Video; £10.99; Certificate 15 (MFB No. 537)

East of Eden

Elia Kazan; USA 1955; Warner Home Video; £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate PG (MFB No. 258)

Eating Raoul

Paul Bartel; USA 1982; Lumiere; £14.99; Certificate 18 Bartel's very caustic, low-budget comedy is about a clean-living, middle-class couple, Paul and Mary Bland, who regard Hollywood as Sodom and Gomorrah rolled into one. Their LA apartment block is full of swingers, the kind of people who put ketchup on their ice cream and go to orgies for recreation. With typical bourgeois pragmatism, the Blands start murdering these low-lives and stealing their money. Detached direction and deadpan acting from Mary Woronov and Paul Bartel ensure a healthy quota of laughs. (MFB No. 588)

Eyewitness

John Hough; USA 1970; Warner Home Video; £10.99; Certificate 15 (MFB No. 441)

Flashpoint

William Tannen; USA 1985; Warner Home Video; £10.99; Certificate 15 (MFB No. 614)

Forbidden Planet

Fred McLeod Wilcox; USA 1956; Beyond Vision Sci-Fi Classic; £14.99; Widescreen; Certificate U "Far and away the most unusual and provocative adventure you've ever seen," the trailer for this sci-fi fantasy claims. But ingenious though all the gadgetry is, it has a very familiar 50s feel. Walter Pidgeon is the Prospero figure who lives on the distant planet of Altair IV and Leslie Nielsen is one of the spacemen who visits. The best performance is from the robot who short-circuits when asked to do anything evil. (MFB No. 301)

4 Shorts by Herzog:

How Much Wood Would a Woodchuck Chuck/ La Soufrière/The Great Ecstasy of Woodcarver Steiner/The Flying Doctors of East Africa Werner Herzog; West Germany 1977/1976/1975/1969; Tartan Video; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate E La Soufrière is the pick of these four short documentaries from Herzog. The director and his crew turn up in a deserted town under a volcano in Guadalupe. The locals have fled, hungry dogs are loping through the streets, and an eruption seems imminent. The atrocious sound quality of the preview tape may add to the eerie mood of the film, but doesn't say very much for the way Tartan releases its material. Also worth a look is the film about the Swiss woodcarver and champion ski-jumper, Walter Steiner, which turns the conventional sporting documentary on its head. As he floats through the air, his body almost parallel with his skis, he looks like a phantom from an expressionist horror pic. (MFB Nos. 550/516/593)

La frontera

Ricardo Larraín; Chile 1991; Tartan Video; £15.99; Subtitles; Widescreen; Certificate 18 Gentle, beautifully observed Chilean fable about a teacher sent into political exile in a backwater town. There's something a little contrived about the way Larraín draws parallels between politics and nature: just as a tidal wave all but destroyed the town, fascism has engulfed the country. However, the landscapes are stunning, and there are frequent moments of delightful, understated comedy. (S&S May 1995)

Giant

George Stevens; USA 1956; Warner Home Video; £12.99; Certificate PG (MFB No. 277)

Heaven & Earth

Oliver Stone; USA 1993; Warner Home Video; £12.99; Certificate 15 (S&S September 1994)

The Hideous Sun Demon

Robert Clarke; USA 1959; First Class Films; £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG Highlights of this awful Killer B are the sequences in which its hero, a physicist who has been exposed to deadly doses of radiation, turns into a scaly monster. Between times, there are endless numbing scenes with scientists waffling dry dialogue. (MFB No. 329)

House of Wax

André de Toth; USA 1953; Lumiere; £10.99; Certificate PG Without the magic specs, De Toth's groundbreaking 3-D horror yarn can't help but seem a little flat. Viewers, though, are at no more of a disadvantage than the director who only had one eye and was hence unable to enjoy the full benefits of stereoscopic vision himself. Vincent Price is a wax sculptor in turn-of-the-century New York who refuses to put a chamber of horrors in his museum. When the place is burnt down, Price opens a new museum with real-life murder victims sealed in wax. (MFB No. 253)

I Was a Male War Bride

Howard Hawks; USA 1949; Fox Video; £12.99; B/W; Certificate U Sublimely funny screwball comedy which wreaks merry havoc with gender

and military mores. Cary Grant is a put-upon French army officer ritually humiliated by the American WAC lieutenant (Ann Sheridan) he falls in love with. The wisecracking dialogue owes something to co-screenwriter Charles Lederer, who also helped script Hawks' classic *His Girl Friday*. (MFB No. 190)

The Inn of the Sixth Happiness

Mark Robson; UK 1958; Fox Video; £12.99; Certificate PG Ingrid Bergman has seldom looked more dowdy than she does in this sanctimonious saga about a missionary who performs all sorts of heroically Christian deeds in 30s China. The production is meticulously shot by Freddie Young, but the whole affair is far too smug for its own good. (MFB No. 300)

Kuroneko (Yabu No Naka No Kuroneko)

Kaneto Shindo; Japan 1968; Tartan Video; £15.99; B/W; Widescreen; Subtitles; Certificate 18 Elegant, exquisitely shot Japanese ghost story, based on an old folk tale. When a young woman and her mother are raped and murdered by samurai warriors, their blood is lapped up by a black cat. This diabolic little feline turns them into vampiric spirits who prey on passing warriors. The formal beauty of the costumes (swirling, diaphanous silk) and of Kiyomi Kuroda's sleek black and white cinematography is belied by the frequent eruptions of graphic violence. Like so many enchanting tales, this has a very dark core. (MFB No. 423)

Mystery Train

Jim Jarmusch; USA 1989; Artificial Eye; £15.99;



Partners in crime: 'Scarlet Street'

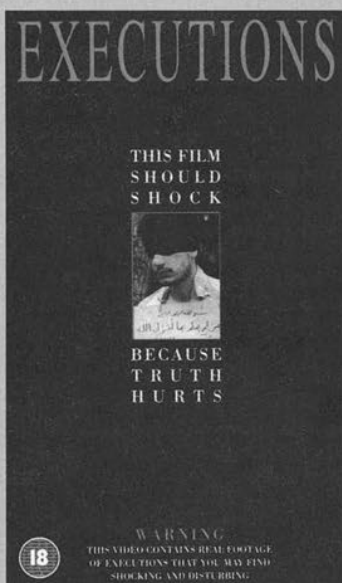
THE ADJUSTER

By Richard Falcon

One result of the brouhaha over *Executions*, a deeply disturbing video documentary about capital punishment, is the light shed on the status of video: if you buy a serious documentary on video about a difficult subject, then you must be up to no good, is an oft-held opinion. While documentaries of the 30s represent the benchmark of seriousness in British cinema, today's video documentaries are often the focus for moral panic – for example, the 'reality videos' (a term which conjures up conscienceless horrors in contrast to television – the home of 'responsible' documentary) such as *Police Stop!* and *Real Life Casualty*. However, a look around the 'special interest' section of larger video stores will show, among the health, sport, gardening, travelogue, birdwatching, train-spotting, cookery and gravel pit fishing tapes, more serious titles such as *War and Peace in the Middle East*, *M15 – The Inside Story*, *State of Terror* (about Hitler and Stalin) and *A Celebration of Mass – Pope John Paul II* (which topped the 'special interest' chart for a while).

All documentaries are exempt from classification unless they include – and here I'm simplifying the criteria – human sexual activity, acts of gross violence towards humans or animals, human genital organs, or if they are designed to stimulate any of these things. Recently, non-exempt videos have prompted some fascinating debates within the BBFC. *Liberation* is a video produced by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre which includes harrowing footage of the Holocaust. Opinions within the Board ranged from a PG to 18 rating; eventually it was passed 12 so as to facilitate its use in schools. But, unlike *Executions*, *Liberation* is only available from the Imperial War Museum shop or by mail order. In a completely different vein, *Tattoo – A Celebration of Body Art* comprises interviews with, and displays of, devotees of tattooing and body piercing. It was felt that on-screen close-ups of pierced genitalia was acceptable at 18 (however, details of the piercing process is another matter). Neither of these videos caused much of a stir in the daily newspapers, unlike *Trouble on the Terraces*, which was passed 18 because of the BBFC's worries about its potential influence on teenagers.

Perhaps the most difficult decision this year regarding a documentary on video was *Ultimate Fighting Championship*, an explicit fight film which claims to contain real-life brutal bouts "without rules", mimicking the kickboxer-style Hollywood genre. This American-made film divided examiners between outright rejection and passing it at 18. It was finally passed 18, with substantial cuts, among them close-up action replays of particularly violent blows. When the video was released, *The Daily Mirror* attempted to initiate a campaign against it. Despite this, and reports in the video trade press alleging that David Alton had been contacting retailers directly to advise them not to stock the title, a controversy failed to emerge. *Out of My Head*, a soon-to-be released anti-drugs comedy documentary starring Rik Mayall has also attracted the attention of *The Daily Mail* as an allegedly dubious "home entertainment video", even though in my



Pushing boundaries: 'Executions'

opinion it contains more salutary information about drug abuse than many straight educational documentaries. It was passed 18 after being submitted to the Board for classification.

Video documentaries on controversial subjects will always be viewed with scepticism because of the enduring worry, not just about children, but about viewers' motives for choosing them as home entertainment. Thus, documentaries such as the *Faces of Death* series and *The Killing of America* have been banned by the BBFC because they take an exclusively prurient attitude to atrocities. *Executions*, however, as with all serious documentaries about difficult issues, appeals to a mix of prurience and curiosity (particularly after the press have provided acres of free publicity). This particular tape, though, delivers something far more upsetting than we had bargained for and if we are not upset (and perhaps this is the worst fear of the moralists), then our attitudes have already been irredeemably coarsened.

● Which is the correct term of abuse for an obnoxious yuppie – arsehole or asshole? This question is prompted by a new cinema advertisement for toilet paper in which a member of that despised 80s breed sits on the toilet, trousers around his ankles, laptop on his thighs, using his mobile phone to sack colleagues, plan an extra-marital affair, and order his wife to make his supper after buying him some more of the branded toilet paper. The pack shot which follows is accompanied by a strap line, read by a clipped middle-class English woman's voice: "So soft, it's recommended by arseholes." When classified by the BBFC, cinema ads have to be rated U or 15, and this one fell in the latter category. The Cinema Advertising Authority, which controls commercials in public cinemas, felt that the American word "asshole" would be less offensive to British cinema audiences. I can see their point, since cinema ads come unbidden before an audience and the potential for offence is greater. But isn't the transatlantic "asshole" spoken by a posh English voice just a little, well... yuppie?

Certificate 15
(MFB No. 671)

Prey

Norman J. Warren; UK 1977; Art House; £12.99; Certificate 18
Shabby, low-budget exploitation pic with a ludicrous storyline about two lesbian lovers, living in seclusion in the countryside, who receive a visit from a passing alien. He's a surly, catatonic sort who kills their hens. (MFB No. 533)

Rebel Without a Cause

Nicholas Ray; USA 1955; Warner Home Video; £12.99; Widescreen; Certificate PG
(MFB No. 265)

Scarlet Street

Fritz Lang; USA 1945; Second Sight Film Noir; £12.99; B/W; Certificate PG
When it comes to playing the downtrodden 'ordinary Joe' with the big dream, Edward G. Robinson has no peer. Here, he is a cashier in a dead-end job who falls under the spell of Joan Bennett. Rather than tell her what he really does, he claims he's an artist. Soon, he is posing as a great painter, and is being fleeced by Bennett and her gangster boyfriend, Dan Duryea. Lang's direction, with its emphasis on bleak, rainswept cityscapes, heightens the pathos of the grim, ultimately tragic tale. (MFB No. 146)

Success is the Best Revenge

Jerzy Skolimowski; UK 1984; First Class Films; £15.99; Certificate 15
This film is a little bit ponderous and self-conscious, both as a study of adolescence and in what it has to say about political exile, and it isn't a patch on the director's earlier film *Moonlighting*. Michael York plays a great Polish theatre director who doesn't understand his unhappy teenage son. (MFB No. 611)

Taste the Blood of Dracula

Peter Sasdy; UK 1970; Lumiere; £10.99; Certificate 15
(MFB No. 437)

That Night in Varennes (La Nuit de Varennes)

Ettore Scola; Italy/France 1982; First Class Films; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 15
Harvey Keitel dons a wig and speaks in French in Scola's lavishly mounted costume pic set around the time of the French Revolution. It's certainly fascinating to see him in the same film as Jean-Louis Barrault (the harlequin from *Les Enfants du paradis*), but with Marcello Mastroianni, Hanna Schygulla and Jean-Louis Trintignant also aboard, the film has too much star power for its own good. (MFB No. 664)

To the Devil a Daughter

Peter Sykes; UK 1976; Lumiere; £10.99; Certificate 18
A late Hammer pic: Richard Widmark, a bit long in the tooth, represents the forces of good, Christopher Lee is in the devil's corner, and a very youthful Nastassja Kinski is the woman whose soul they fight over. With its echoes of *Rosemary's Baby* and disturbing scenes of Satanic worship, this is altogether more chilling than the average *Dracula* or *Frankenstein* pic. (MFB No. 506)

Trouble in Mind

Alan Rudolph; USA 1985; First Class Films; £15.99; Certificate 15
At once gritty and weirdly exotic,

Rudolph's self-reflexive noir thriller takes genre commonplaces and pushes them to the limits. Gangsters ought to dress flashily, but when small-time huckster Keith Carradine tries to become a big-town hood, he announces the fact with an outrageous red suit and an *Eraserhead*-style haircut. Similarly, heroes are supposed to be laid-back, but not quite as laid-back as Kris Kristofferson is here. Ironically, the one character who underplays is Divine as the urbane local Mr Big. (MFB No. 632)

Wolfen

Michael Wadleigh; USA 1981; Warner Home Video; £10.99; Widescreen; Certificate 18
Wolfen boasts tremendous special effects and a nicely ironic performance from Albert Finney as a sardonic, overweight cop. The script is a worthy affair, with property developers as much the villains as the wolves which savage them. But the story is bogged down by its unnecessary emphasis on police procedures. (MFB No. 575)

Wyatt Earp

Lawrence Kasdan; USA 1994; Warner Home Video; £14.99; Certificate 12
(S&S September 1994) □

Retail premiere

La Carne

Marco Ferreri; Italy 1991; Art House; £15.99; Subtitles; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Giuseppe Aurimemma; Screenplay Marco Ferreri; Lead Actors Sergio Castellito, Francesca Dellera; Philippe Leotard, Farid Chopel
Food and sex are the main motors in this thoroughly engaging comedy about a couple with a voracious appetite for both. Paolo is a shambling, overweight nightclub pianist. Francesca is the voluptuous siren with whom he elopes to the seaside for a few days. Eccentric and unkempt, Paolo is much given to bellowing florid, poetic compliments to his mistress as they make love or eat. The film is as fleshy and self-indulgent as its characters, but is rumbustious and funny enough to get away with it.

The Cat's Victims (Il gatto dagli occhi di gialla)

Antonio Bido; Italy 1977; Redemption; £12.99; Certificate 18; 100 minutes; Producer Gabriella Nardi; Screenplay Antonio Bido; Lead Actors Corrado Pani, Paola Tedesco; Franco Citti, Fernando Cerulli.
Anaemic giallo (Italian thriller), slackly shot, short of the usual helpings of gore and without much suspense. After witnessing a murder, a dancer is stalked by the killer.

Rats: Night of Terror

Vincent Dawn; Italy 1984; Art House; £12.99; Certificate 18; 90 minutes; Producer Unknown; Screenplay Claudio Fragasso, Herve Piccini; Lead Actors Richard Raymond, Janna Ryann, Alex McBride, Richard Cross
An atomic bomb has devastated the planet, forcing humankind underground. The script doesn't much matter, the real stars are the rats. A more intelligent breed than they used to be, they don't want to share their environment with humans. Definitely not a movie for the squeamish (at one stage, a rat pops its little grey head out of a murdered woman's mouth).

Letters

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 0171 436 2327

Violent critics

From Martin Barker

It is funny, but at the same time almost poignant, when a hostile letter sets out to disprove and ends up confirming all the things it is attacking. Thus Brian Parkinson's reply (S&S July) to my article on 'Violence'. One of my main points was precisely the problem of no shared language between the 'violence critics', and those wanting to challenge them from alternative stances.

Parkinson restates my argument, that the central problem is that there isn't an object - 'violence' - that can be researched. But having done that, he bowdlerises it by reducing it to a claim that "the content of any message is determined completely by the surrounding discourses". Who ever said that? I certainly didn't, and don't have the slightest interest in such an idea (as I think the many other things I have written on censorship and its objects would show).

He really does miss the point, in a sadly predictable way. He asks us to compare *Natural Born Killers* with *Before Sunrise* and to agree that the former is more violent. Let's play that game. It is also more edited; it also contains far more intertextual references; it also, arguably, plays with the emotions of the viewer far less. So what is this 'thing' called 'violence' of which we are supposed insistently to ask: might it get reproduced outside? Why is it the one component to be drawn out to become evidence in the maintenance of a 70-year research tradition?

There is a reason. At back of his argument is that insistent implicit theory that viewers respond to it as violence. That is, children watch *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* and, whether they realise it or not, what they are responding to is 'violence' - and then the question is: are they got at by it? How many? Who's 'vulnerable'? Who, having seen the 'violence', might re-enact it? It matters not that they may talk of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* in ways that it sounds like a morality tale; we can ignore the fact they play at it.

Of course it is true that such play sometimes gets rough. Wow! There's a piece of new knowledge. But if you want to understand the role that watching *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* might have in sustaining rough-house play among children, you just have to start elsewhere. Not in 'violence', but in its connections with much wider themes of, for instance, bodies becoming empowered - that inside every wimp is a possible Gladiator. What are stories like that speaking to? What is it in our culture that many children today recognise themselves in that? To reject the idea that *Power Rangers* or whatever else is about 'violence' is not to see all things as nice. It is, though, to see this 'violence' agenda as part of the problem, not the solution. It prevents us asking other, more intelligible questions.

Actually, the irony is that I have far more respect for the nature of textual messages than Brian Parkinson. And that is because, looking at any film, I find it necessary to ask how events, narrative and narration, editing, intertextual references and so on combine to produce something which, if you

insist on it, I will call its 'message'.

I resent only one part of his reply, and that is Parkinson's final sentence. He puts himself on the side of the good guys by stating his opposition to censorship (though of course NBK was a "deeply confused" film - well thanks, Brian, for making sure we knew what a truly judicious judgment on that would be like). He also wants to be able to read the debates, including even Barker's silly arguments. But maybe Barker doesn't want this: "Perhaps in his view these prejudicial texts are what should be censored or banned?" That is just plain offensive.

Since the late 20s an entire research tradition, whose total expenditure must run into hundreds of millions of dollars and pounds, and which has been guaranteed serious political reception and 'front page' media coverage on almost every occasion, has dominated the media research agenda - and achieved nothing. A few people stand up and say, "Hey, let's change the question," and even, "How about just a smidgeon of that funding for some research that doesn't entirely presume its answers in advance?" - and we're censoring? Censorship isn't about a few weedy individuals like me moaning about unfairness. It is a matter of real political forces, access to resources, access to publicity, the setting of public agendas, and their use for purposes which are plainly political. Ask the Policy Studies Institute what happened to their research on the media preferences of young delinquents, then compare it to the attention given the entirely assertoric Newson Report. At what points, exactly, did "censorship" happen in that debacle? As I said, there just isn't a common language.

Faculty of Humanities, University of the West of England, Bristol

H is for horrific

From Ian Conrich

In the 'Forbidden Cinema' supplement to the June issue of *Sight and Sound*, brief mention is made of the H category of film classification.

You write that the H stood for "Horror", when it actually stood for "Horrific". The rating was largely awarded to what you term "Hollywood monster movies", but it should be noted that it also covered non-horror films, such as Abel Gance's 1938 anti-war film *J'accuse*, Lloyd Bacon's 1939 film *A Child is Born* and a 1945 United Nations War Crimes Film. Horror films had originally been most commonly referred to in the UK as *Demonique*, *Gothique* or *Fantastique* films. It was when the H classification was introduced in 1933 that they generally became known as "horrific" films.

You also mention that "this advised that the films were unsuitable for children, but did not bar them from cinemas. The first category to do this was the X certificate." This is incorrect. It should first be noted that there were two stages to the creation of the H rating. The first, the H classification, introduced in January 1933, was purely advisory and not a form of certification. Awarded to "any films which are likely to frighten or horrify children under the age of 16 years", it allowed children into these films only if they were accompanied by a parent or a *bona fide* guardian. The unfortunate consequence of this was that children reportedly

requested or in some situations paid adults who were complete strangers to act as their parent or guardian so that they could attend the screening. The second stage occurred in June 1937, when the "horrific" category was accompanied by an official BBFC certificate. It was at this point that children, as you fail to indicate, were prohibited from watching all films carrying the H certificate. So the H and not the X was the first certificate to bar children from cinemas. As *Today's Cinema* (9 June 1937) stated, "H is the certificate letter for 'horrific' films, the general license terms for which are that the film may not be shown in any circumstances to children under the age of 16 years, whether accompanied by an adult or not." The certificate was not adopted simultaneously throughout the country, in some places taking two years to be accepted. Finally, the X certificate did not subsume the H in 1952, but was adopted by the BBFC in January 1951.

London N14

Changing the name

From Peter Calder

In her oddly bloodless review of *Once Were Warriors* (S&S April), Lizzie Francke describes Aotearoa (which she misspells Aoteara and Aotera on successive lines) as "the promised haven of Maori myth".

I find it hard to see what that might mean (a haven from what? what myth?) but it's wrong anyway and nor does it mean "thin white cloud". Aotearoa - the pre-European Maori word for these islands - means "[land of the] long white cloud". The component parts are *ao* (cloud), *tea* (white) and *roa* (long) and the pronunciation, for the curious, is roughly "ow-tay-a-raw-a".

Francke and her readers may like to know that in the current political climate here, where issues of Maori land rights and sovereignty are at the top of the political agenda, "Aotearoa" is widely used as the country's name and, in official (non-governmental) formal English, "Aotearoa New Zealand" is almost as common as plain "New Zealand".

By the way, did Francke think the movie was any good?

Film Critic, New Zealand Herald

Untruest cut

From David Lister

Reference to the video release of *True Romance* (S&S January) being uncut is misleading, to say the least; the UK video version is quite different to the UK theatre release. One explanation might be that the UK video is in fact the US theatre release which (if memory serves correctly) was cropped of certain of the more 'disturbing' moments in its violent passages, so as to ensure an "R" rating instead of the box office unfriendly "NC-17" rating.

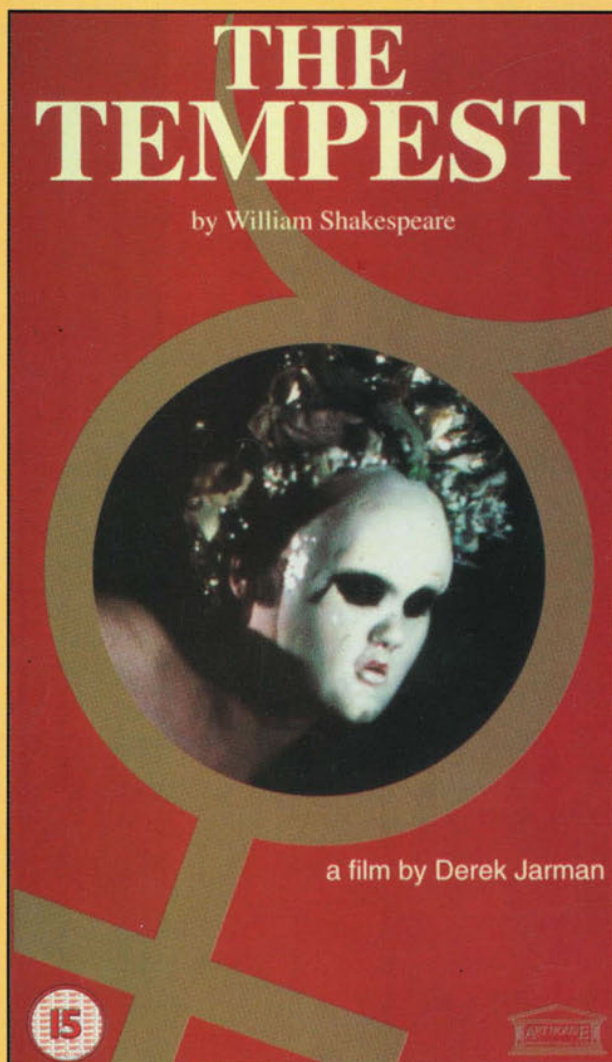
Strangely, and by way of contrast, it would appear that the UK theatre release is very similar if not identical to the US Laserdisc release - which had all the cropped bits put back in and was let loose on the US public as an "unrated" directors cut. (What it must be like to have a Constitution which allows Freedom of Information!) The US Laserdisc is some eight or nine minutes longer than the UK video. It's a strange old world isn't it!

Leigh, Lancashire

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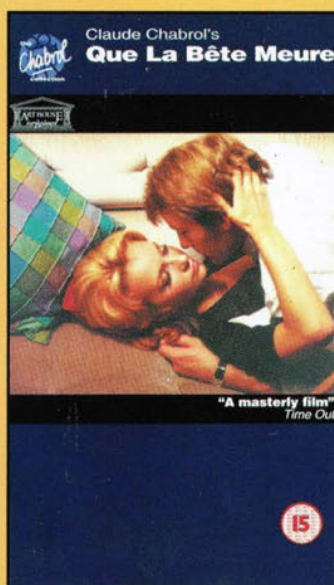


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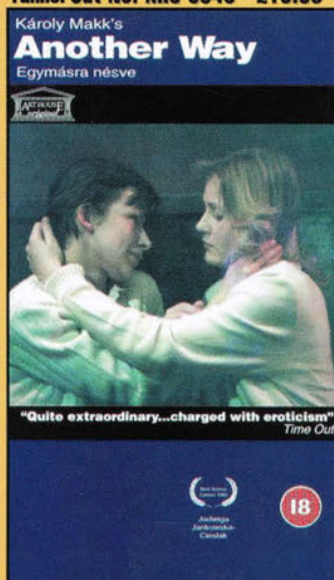
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